

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES, LEADING THE WAY

The creation of the annual state budget is a time of possibilities, a time to remember what we can accomplish when we combine our talent and resources with vision and purpose. For the Fiscal Year 2019 Senate Ways and Means budget, we continue to draw on our strengths to address the needs of our residents.

We are a caring, compassionate Commonwealth. We recognize that when all people in the Commonwealth are given the opportunities to participate in Massachusetts' economy—*as well as the tools to succeed*—we all benefit.

To that end, this budget makes robust and critical investments in K-12 education, the fundamental building block of individual and shared success, and adds funds to expand access to preschool for three and four year olds across the state. In addition, this proposal includes investments that provide tools to low income families, such as an increase to the state's Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which is one of the best ways to support working families and spur our economy. This proposal also lifts the cap on kids for families receiving transitional assistance effective January 2019, raises the clothing allowance for children and provides additional housing supports. Finally, we fund the Chapter 70 education formula at its highest level ever to better support all school districts across the Commonwealth.

These initiatives do not matter just to the people they help. When people fulfill their economic potential, they are more independent and less involved in the child welfare or criminal justice systems. They are less likely to end up living alone, isolated and vulnerable to health problems, mental illness or substance misuse. These initiatives help us build a strong sense of community and create healthy and thriving neighborhoods.

We are a Commonwealth that celebrates and draws from our diverse regions. Throughout the development of this budget proposal, each Senator has contributed his or her expertise on what each region needs, and what each region contributes to our overall success. This budget includes initiatives that focus on regional equity and regional empowerment to help all regions of the state become stronger economic drivers, and better places to live, work and raise families.

Hearing the overwhelming call for greater transportation options throughout the state, this budget makes record investments in our Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs).

Finally, we are a Commonwealth that leads the nation. Given continued uncertainty at the federal level, Massachusetts has a greater imperative now than ever to lead on issues with real impact on people's lives. This is especially true when it comes to the pressing issue of health

care cost containment, which this budget proposal tackles with an innovative approach to drug pricing. We also seek to maintain our competitive edge through investments in education, environmental stewardship, and mental health and substance misuse services.

I would like to thank Senate President Harriette Chandler for her leadership and counsel, as well as the members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, in particular my Vice Chair Joan Lovely of Salem, Assistant Vice Chair Sonia Chang-Diaz of Boston and Ranking Minority Member Viriato deMacedo of Plymouth for their hard work and thoughtfulness in helping to prepare the FY 2019 budget. Thank you also to House Ways and Means Chairman Jeffrey Sánchez for your partnership on this year's budget.

It has been a great privilege and honor to work with my colleagues and the people of Massachusetts to lead and guide the budget process for the Massachusetts State Senate for the past four years. I look forward to Massachusetts continuing to create opportunities and lead the way for our residents, our Commonwealth, and the nation.



Karen E. Spilka
Chair, Senate Committee on Ways and Means