

## ***BOLDLY MOVING MASSACHUSETTS FORWARD***

To the Members of the Massachusetts State Senate,

This is the first budget in which I have the honor as Chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means to present you with the Committee's recommendations for the Fiscal Year 2020 (FY 2020) Budget. Thank you to Senate President Karen Spilka for bestowing me with the great opportunity to lead the Committee and for her leadership. The Committee's budget proposal builds upon a collaborative approach that has relied on the dedicated advocacy of every Senator and the hard work of the incredibly talented Senate Ways and Means staff to help guide budget development. This budget reflects a commitment to achieving equal access for all to the fundamental pillars of economic health: education, health care, transportation, and fairness. With an endless focus on the future, the Committee's FY 2020 budget is a fiscally responsible budget that positions us to confront challenges in our shared efforts to ***boldly move Massachusetts forward***.

*The Committee's budget will give more students access to better education.* Since the Education Reform Act of 1993, we have made substantial progress toward providing access to high quality education for all of Massachusetts' children. However, we know more work is required if we want all children to reach their full potential and build upon our economic foundation. While the Joint Committee on Education works on how best to implement the recommendations of the Foundation Budget Review Commission, the Senate Ways and Means FY 2020 budget takes a bold step towards meaningfully increasing education funding. The Committee's budget proposal provides a groundbreaking level of investment: \$5.176 billion in Chapter 70 education funding aid, an increase of \$268 million over FY 2019.

In addition, the Senate Ways and Means FY 2020 budget is doubling down on our commitments to providing children with disabilities and diverse needs equal access to a high quality education. To meet our responsibilities to this growing and complex population, the Committee's budget fully funds the Special Education Circuit Breaker at \$345 million, a \$26 million increase over FY 2019. With these bold investments, the Senate is fulfilling its enduring commitment to our cities and towns and ensuring that children of all backgrounds have access to greater educational opportunities.

*The Committee's budget ensures that Massachusetts remains a national leader in providing access to high quality affordable health care,* and includes those that have been, for too long, excluded from the conversation. The Senate remains tirelessly committed to maintaining and expanding access to mental health services and ensuring we do what we can to help end the stigma of mental illness. After all, community-based mental health care is essential to the health, safety,

and overall well-being of individuals, families and communities. With this in mind, the Senate Ways and Means FY 2020 budget includes \$20 million in new funding to support vital mental and behavioral health initiatives, including targeted investments to support the substance use disorder workforce, expanded access to new recovery centers, and support for individuals living with mental illness or a substance use disorder. Additionally, the Committee's budget includes provisions to prevent behavioral health providers from receiving unfair retroactive claim denials from health insurers.

The Senate remains focused on the pursuit to keep affordable health care accessible for over 1.8 million people and manage MassHealth costs that account for roughly 40% of the state budget. As such, the Senate Ways and Means FY 2020 budget includes sensible and innovative reforms to contain the growth in MassHealth pharmacy spending that has nearly doubled over the past five years. We permit the Secretary of Health and Human Services to directly negotiate supplemental rebates with pharmaceutical manufacturers and explore new and creative cost savings initiatives for MassHealth to purchase prescription drugs. Without these reforms, the rising cost of prescription drugs will only continue to undercut our collective goals to curb MassHealth costs and keep health care affordable and accessible for all families and employers.

*The Committee's budget delivers access to jobs and economic opportunities to underserved residents across the state.* From our most rural communities to our dense urban centers, the nexus between transportation and economic development is critical to the well-being of our Commonwealth. Informed by the findings of the Task Force on Regional Transit Authorities Performance and Funding's Final Report, the Senate Ways and Means FY 2020 budget proposal once again prioritizes economic opportunity and recommends \$90.5 million in funding to our RTAs. This will incentivize RTAs to adopt best practices, improve efficiency, promote accountability and expand delivery of transportation services accessible to all regions across the state.

*Lastly, The Committee's budget keeps Massachusetts at the forefront of issues that address accessibility, opportunity, fairness and economic vitality.* The budget accomplishes this by investing in reentry programs that provide at-risk individuals with second chances and increasing access to safe and stable housing for families at risk of homelessness. It also maintains our deeply held support for children, young adults and individuals with intellectual or development disabilities.

Once again, thank you to my good friend, Senate President Karen Spilka, for her leadership and counsel, and for laying a strong foundation for the Committee to build upon in her time as my predecessor. I would also like to thank the members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, specifically my Vice Chair Cindy Friedman of Arlington, Assistant Vice Chair Jason Lewis of

Winchester and Ranking Minority Member Viriato deMacedo of Plymouth for their collaboration, dedication and thoughtfulness in helping craft the Committee's FY 2020 budget proposal.

Thank you to my colleagues for your tireless work in advocating for the programs that we have prioritized in this budget. The time, effort and detail that went into shaping this budget reflects our work together as stewards of taxpayer dollars. In our steadfast determination to maintain fiscal responsibility and create access to opportunities for all, your advocacy and dedication has helped thoughtfully guide our committee as we developed this budget. I look forward to continuing our work together to ***boldly move Massachusetts forward.***

For the Committee,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael J. Rodrigues", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Michael J. Rodrigues**  
**Chair, Senate Committee on Ways and Means**