

MassSenate

Massachusetts State Senate

Session Report

2021–2022 Legislative Session

May 2023

MassSenate

Session Report

Table of Contents

2021–2022 Legislative Session

	<i>Page Number</i>
<u>Session Highlights</u>	3
<u>Investing in the Commonwealth: Appropriations & Funding Commitments</u>	4
<u>COVID-19 Response</u>	7
<u>Active Military & Veterans</u>	10
<u>Equity, Access & Inclusion</u>	13
<u>Public K–12, Early & Higher Education</u>	18
<u>Mental Health, Public Health & Health Care</u>	23
<u>Economic Development</u>	30
<u>Children, Families & Persons with Disabilities</u>	34
<u>Housing & Support for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness</u>	38
<u>Climate Change & Environmental Protection</u>	41
<u>Transportation</u>	44
<u>Public Safety</u>	48
<u>Election Safety, Integrity & Access</u>	50
<u>Animal Welfare</u>	52

MassSenate

Session Highlights

Expanding access to mental health care. Recognizing that mental health is as important as physical health, this landmark legislation implements a wide variety of reforms to provide patients with equitable access to mental health care and removes barriers to care by supporting the behavioral health workforce. This legislation is being hailed as the strongest mental health parity law in the United States.

Addressing the generational challenge of climate change. This session, the Massachusetts Senate led the Legislature in passing nation-leading climate change legislation—twice. *An Act creating a next-generation roadmap for Massachusetts climate policy* sets a course for Massachusetts to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, and *An Act driving clean energy and offshore wind* substantially furthers the implementation of this change by encouraging the use of green energy in key sectors of the Massachusetts economy.

Protecting reproductive and gender-affirming health care. Following the Supreme Court’s decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* and building on legislation codifying and expanding access to reproductive rights in 2020, the Senate led efforts to further protect and expand reproductive health care and gender-affirming care in the Commonwealth.

Ensuring an equitable post-COVID recovery. Through annual and supplemental budgets and an additional omnibus spending package utilizing funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), the Legislature delivered targeted support to workers, businesses, housing, health care, mental and behavioral health, climate preparedness, education, and workforce development—with a focus on making equitable investments and prioritizing communities disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including a \$500 million program which delivered \$500 checks to hundreds of thousands of lower income workers.

Making it easier to vote. At a time when democracy is under attack nationally and across the globe, the VOTES Act, championed by the Senate, implements vital measures to protect and expand voting rights here in Massachusetts, including by permanently codifying into law the popular mail-in and early voting options used in the 2020 election in Massachusetts.

Safeguarding care for veterans. Following the tragic deaths of 77 veterans at the soldiers’ home in Holyoke during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, the legislature passed laws to increase access to long-term care services for veterans across the state, including by constructing a modern facility for veterans in Holyoke, as well as to prevent future such tragedies by restructuring the chain of command and increasing public oversight at veterans’ homes.

Investing in the Commonwealth’s transportation system. In this legislation, the Legislature authorized more than \$11 billion in bonds for a wide array of transportation infrastructure projects, including for addressing safety concerns at the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority and for a new East-West passenger rail project. This legislation positions Massachusetts to compete for further transportation funding as made available in the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

Allowing immigrants to drive safely throughout Massachusetts communities. By overriding the governor’s veto, the Massachusetts Legislature passed a new law which promotes immigrant inclusion and public safety by allowing residents who lack federal immigration status to apply for a Massachusetts driver’s license.

MassSenate

Investing in the Commonwealth: Appropriations & Funding Commitments

Passed by Constitutional Convention

Increasing investment in transportation and education through the Fair Share Act. During a constitutional convention, the Massachusetts Legislature voted to move forward a ballot question to amend the Massachusetts Constitution to place an additional four per cent tax on annual taxable income in excess of \$1 million. This revenue would fund repair and maintenance projects for roads, bridges or public transportation as well as public education, including support for early education and care and public higher education. The constitutional amendment will be placed on the ballot in 2022.

A Proposal for a legislative amendment to the Constitution to provide resources for education and transportation through an additional tax on incomes in excess of one million dollars ([H.86](#)) was passed by the Constitutional Convention on June 9, 2021.

Signed into Law

Ensuring an open, transparent, and thorough public process for the distribution of funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). This legislation places federal dollars into a segregated fund that is controlled by the Legislature, ensuring that communities, stakeholders and members of the public throughout the Commonwealth can provide feedback on how these recovery dollars should be used.

An Act relative to transferring federal funds to the Federal COVID-19 Response Fund ([H.3827](#)) was signed into law on June 28, 2021, as Chapter 22 of the Acts of 2021.

Helping Massachusetts get ‘back to better’ through the Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) budget. This \$48.07 billion budget maintains fiscal responsibility, does not cut services despite the uncertainty surrounding the pandemic recovery, and makes targeted investments to address emerging needs, safeguard the health and wellness of the most vulnerable populations and ensure residents will benefit equitably as the state recovers from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Taking into consideration strong tax revenue performance in Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21), the final FY22 budget increases revenue assumptions by \$4.2 billion over the December 2020 consensus revenue projection for a new tax revenue projection of \$34.35 billion. The FY22 budget transfers funds into the Stabilization Fund, projecting an estimated balance of approximately \$5.8 billion for this crucial ‘rainy day’ fund at the end of the fiscal year. Maintaining the Legislature’s commitment to implementing the Student Opportunity Act (SOA) by Fiscal Year 2027, the first year of the SOA is fully funded, consistent with the \$5.503 billion local aid agreement reached in March 2020, amounting to an increase of \$220 million over FY21. Additionally, a supplemental payment of \$250 million was transferred to the Pension Liability Fund to reduce the Commonwealth’s pension liability.

An Act making appropriations for the fiscal year 2022 for the maintenance of the departments, boards, commissions, institutions and certain activities of the Commonwealth, for interest, sinking fund and serial bond requirements and for certain permanent improvements ([H.4002](#)) was signed into law on July 16, 2021, as Chapter 24 of the Acts of 2021.

Addressing time-sensitive needs through a supplemental budget. This \$261.6 million supplemental budget for FY21 addresses time-sensitive deficiencies, extends expanded voting options, provides support for the implementation of the 2020 landmark police reform law and makes investments to further the Commonwealth's recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The supplemental budget also includes \$191 million to provide support and stability for our early educator workforce, as well as \$27.9 million for one-time economic relief payments to families receiving transitional assistance.

An Act making appropriations for fiscal year 2021 to provide for supplementing certain existing appropriations and for certain other activities and projects ([H.3973](#))
was signed into law on **July 29, 2021**, as **Chapter 29 of the Acts of 2021**.

Meeting the needs of the Commonwealth and ensuring fiscal stability. The Fiscal Year 2021 closeout supplemental budget addresses time-sensitive deficiencies that require the Legislature's attention due to unanticipated costs in FY21, and sets aside unobligated FY21 surplus funds to be considered later in the fall. Programs funded in the bill include collective bargaining and labor-relations, special education schools, alcohol and substance use facilities, and programs designed to mitigate overcrowding in homeless shelters by offering supportive housing.

An Act making appropriations for the fiscal year 2021 to provide for supplementing certain existing appropriations and for certain other activities and projects ([H.4200](#))
was signed into law on **October 20, 2021**, as **Chapter 76 of the Acts of 2021**.

Investing in communities hit hard by COVID-19 and supporting the ongoing economic recovery through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and Fiscal Year 2021 surplus spending. This \$4 billion omnibus spending package delivers targeted support to workers and businesses, as well as housing, health care, mental and behavioral health, climate preparedness, education, and workforce development, with a focus on making equitable investments and prioritizing communities disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Following six public hearings and more than a thousand pieces of testimony received, the House and Senate's spending proposals were unanimously approved by each chamber. This bill utilizes \$2.55 billion in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds and \$1.45 billion in Fiscal Year 2021 surplus funds.

An Act relative to immediate COVID-19 recovery needs ([H.4269](#))
was signed, in part, into law on **December 13, 2021**, as **Chapter 102 of the Acts of 2021**.

An Act establishing the behavioral health trust fund and the behavioral health advisory commission ([H.4288](#))
was passed over a veto into law on **May 26, 2022**, as **Chapter 77 of the Acts of 2022**.

Preventing future spread of COVID-19 and its variants and addressing overpayment of unemployment insurance. This \$101 million supplemental budget provides residents with greater access to tests, vaccines, and masks, and prioritizes communities disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as frontline workers. The bill also provides increased flexibility for unemployment insurance recipients to address overpayments of pandemic unemployment benefits and funds an expanded multilingual campaign to notify unemployment claimants of their legal rights.

An Act making appropriations for the fiscal year 2022 to provide for supplementing certain existing appropriations and for certain other activities and projects ([H.4345](#))
was signed into law on **February 15, 2022**, as **Chapter 22 of the Acts of 2022**.

Increasing assistance for the COVID-19 response, housing, restaurants, and Ukrainian refugees. This \$1.67 billion supplemental budget for Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) provides funding for the state’s long-term COVID-19 response, housing and energy assistance for families, and extends popular dining and take-out options. In response to the ongoing war in Ukraine, the legislation also provides for the resettlement of Ukrainian refugees in Massachusetts and divests the state’s pensions fund from Russian assets, along with other timely investments.

*An Act making appropriations for fiscal year 2022 to provide for supplementing certain existing appropriations and for certain other activities and projects ([H.4578](#)) was signed into law on **April 4, 2022**, as **Chapter 42 of the Acts of 2022**.*

Upholding fiscal responsibility and making targeted investments to strengthen the state’s economic foundation and wellbeing of residents and communities through the Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) budget. This \$52.7 billion budget provides significant funds to invest in the Commonwealth’s long-term future obligations and reflects the Legislature’s commitment to ensuring that communities can provide essential services to the public while rebuilding from a once-in-a-generation pandemic. Taking into consideration historic tax revenue performance in Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22), the FY23 conference report increases revenue projections by \$2.66 billion to \$39.575 billion. The FY23 budget transfers funds into the Stabilization Fund, projecting an estimated historic balance of approximately \$7.35 billion for this crucial ‘rainy day’ fund at the end of the fiscal year. Prioritizing funding for education, this budget invests \$6 billion in Chapter 70 funding (an increase of \$495 million over FY22), allocates \$250 million to continue stabilization grants for early education and care providers, sets aside \$150 million for the Student Opportunity Act (SOA) Investment fund, provides \$110 million for the continuation of universal school meals, and includes \$175 million for a new High-Quality Early Education and Care Affordability Trust Fund to support the implementation of the recommendations made by the Early Education and Care Economic Review Commission. Other spending highlights include \$19.48 billion in MassHealth, \$1.231 billion in Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA), \$219.4 million for Emergency Assistance Family Shelters, and more than \$200 million for Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT). In addition to the transfer of over \$1.3 billion of sales tax revenue to the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), the budget also sets aside \$187 million in operating funding for the MBTA, as well as a new additional \$266.2 million for a safety and workforce reserve to address ongoing safety concerns. To support families in poverty, the budget also makes a record investment in the annual child’s clothing allowance and includes a 10 percent increase to Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) and Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled and Children (EAEDC).

*An Act making appropriations for the fiscal year 2023 for the maintenance of the departments, boards, commissions, institutions, and certain activities of the Commonwealth, for interest, sinking fund, and serial bond requirements, and for certain permanent improvements ([H.5050](#)) was signed into law on **July 28, 2022**, as **Chapter 126 of the Acts of 2022**.*

Funding public construction and investing in the future of the Commonwealth through a general government bond bill. This \$5.07 billion general government bond bill would fund construction projects related to health care, higher education, information technology, workforce development, the environment, affordable housing, and more. The Legislature also included a five-year moratorium on the construction of new prisons in Massachusetts, although this language was vetoed by the Governor.

*An Act financing the general governmental infrastructure of the Commonwealth ([H.4807](#)) was signed into law on **August 4, 2022**, as **Chapter 140 of the Acts of 2022**.*

MassSenate

COVID-19 Response

Signed into Law

Guaranteeing COVID-19 emergency paid sick leave to workers and avoiding drastic unemployment insurance (UI) rate increases for employers. This legislation ensures that all Massachusetts employees, including frontline workers in hospitals and classrooms, receive emergency leave for up to five paid days off for COVID-related concerns. For unemployed workers whose income falls below 200 per cent of the poverty line, this legislation provides targeted relief by waiving penalties for missed tax payments on UI benefits received in 2020. For employers, this bill prevents increases in the UI rate schedule for 2021 and 2022, providing employers with needed stability and relief as the Commonwealth continues to recover. Furthermore, this legislation allows for state borrowing, secured by a temporary employer assessment, to ensure the solvency of the UI trust fund and excludes forgiven PPP loans from gross income for small businesses organized as pass-through entities.

*An Act providing for Massachusetts COVID-19 emergency paid sick leave ([H.3702](#)) was signed into law on **May 28, 2021**, as **Chapter 16 of the Acts of 2021**.*

Extending protections instituted during the COVID-19 State of Emergency. This legislation temporarily extends a slate of measures, which were implemented during the COVID-19 State of Emergency, beyond the State of Emergency's expiration on June 15, 2021. Provisions that were extended pertained to eviction protections, COVID-19 testing and vaccine administration at community health centers, unemployment benefits for individuals without access to childcare, virtual public meetings, remote notary activities, relaxed town meeting quorum requirements, skilled nursing in assisted-living facilities and expanded outdoor dining and alcohol to-go at restaurants.

*An Act relative to extending certain COVID-19 measures adopted during the state of emergency ([S.2475](#)) was signed into law on **June 16, 2021**, as **Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021**.*

Extending COVID-19 emergency paid sick leave for workers. This legislation extends the emergency paid sick leave previously extended to Massachusetts employees, including frontline workers in hospitals and classrooms, to April 1, 2022. It allows all workers to receive emergency leave for up to five paid days off for COVID-related concerns, including paid leave from work to attend a vaccine appointment or to assist a loved one in getting a vaccine appointment. It also expands eligibility to parents who might be forced to take time off from work to take their child to receive a vaccination. The nation leading COVID-19 emergency paid sick leave program instituted by the Massachusetts Legislature provided over \$100 million in benefits to workers impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequently, the February 2022 Supplemental Budget allocated additional funds to replenish the State's Emergency COVID Paid Sick Leave Program

*An Act extending COVID-19 Massachusetts emergency paid sick leave ([H.4127](#)) was signed into law on **September 29, 2021**, as **Chapter 55 of the Acts of 2021**.*

Further extending housing and local government protections instituted during the COVID-19 State of Emergency. This legislation temporarily extends a slate of measures, which were implemented during the COVID-19 State of Emergency, beyond the State of Emergency's expiration on July 15, 2022. Provisions that were extended pertained to virtual public meetings, remote notary activities, relaxed town meeting quorum requirements, and skilled nursing in assisted-living facilities. This legislation also made permanent the enhanced notices to quit, which include information on tenants' rights as well as methods for seeking legal and financial assistance, that must be served to tenants prior to an eviction.

*An Act relative to extending certain state of emergency accommodations ([S.2985](#)) was signed into law on **July 16, 2022**, as **Chapter 107 of the Acts of 2022**.*

Budget Appropriations & Additional Policy Related to COVID-19

Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Highlights

- \$40 million to provide additional aid to districts experiencing increases in student enrollment compared to October 2020
- \$15 million to support local and regional boards of health as they continue to work to address the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

July 2021 Supplemental Budget Highlights

- \$11 million for the Department of State Police for pandemic-related costs
- \$9.9 million for increased COVID-19 costs at the Department of Public Health

December 2021 ARPA Bill Highlights

- \$500 million for premium pay bonuses for essential workers who worked during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing \$500 checks to hundreds of thousands of lower income workers.
- \$260 million for acute hospitals impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic
- \$50 million for nursing facilities, including \$25 million for capital support to increase the quality of patient care and \$25 million for workforce initiatives
- \$25 million for youth-at-risk supports and grant programs for community violence prevention and re-entry organizations, focused on communities disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic
- \$5 million for Health Care For All to conduct a community-based MassHealth redetermination and vaccination outreach, education, and access campaign targeted in communities disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic

February 2022 Supplemental Budget Highlights

- \$50 million to further increase the availability and encourage use of COVID-19 testing and vaccination throughout the state. This investment includes:
 - \$7 million to assist community organizations in promoting vaccine awareness and education in disproportionately impacted communities, as well as for a new grant program through the Massachusetts Cultural Council for cultural institutions to help promote vaccine awareness and education
 - \$5 million to expand the capacity of community health centers to test and vaccinate, including funding to hire additional staff
 - \$5 million for increasing vaccination rates among five through eleven-year-olds
- \$25 million for the state to purchase and distribute high-quality masks in Massachusetts, with priority given to education and health care workers
- \$25 million to replenish the State's Emergency COVID Paid Sick Leave Program

April 2022 Supplemental Budget Highlights

- \$700 million for planning the state’s long-term COVID-19 response, including:
 - \$433 million for no-cost COVID-19 testing services to be available to residents of all ages and from all parts of the state
 - \$125 million to support the workforce involved in COVID-19 response efforts including temporary staffing and nursing rapid response teams
 - \$72 million for treatment for individuals with COVID-19
 - \$45.5 million for vaccination efforts, including pop-up sites, clinics, and additional testing infrastructure

Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Highlights

\$15 million for grants to support local and regional boards of health, continuing our efforts to build upon the successful State Action for Public Health Excellence (SAPHE) Program

November 2022 Economic Development Bill Highlights

- \$350 million for hospitals that have become fiscally strained during the COVID-19 pandemic
- \$200 million for COVID-19 response efforts

Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Policy Highlights

- Requiring the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to create targeted outreach to frontline workers about resources available to individuals experiencing trauma related to the COVID-19 pandemic
- Directing the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to conduct a study evaluating the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the delivery of educational services and support to marginalized students
- Directing the Children’s Behavioral Health Advisory Council to analyze and report on the existing and anticipated impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on children’s behavioral health and the services and support needed
- Empowering the commission on autism to investigate and report on the impact of COVID-19 on individuals of color who have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder

December 2021 ARPA Bill Policy Highlights

Establishing an equity and accountability review panel to track the amount and percentage of American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funds spent in underserved communities and awarded to minority-owned and women-owned businesses

April 2022 Supplemental Budget Policy Highlights

- Extending popular pandemic-related provisions including outdoor dining services, and beer, wine and cocktails to-go through April 2023
- Extending COVID-19 related bonuses for members of the Massachusetts National Guard

MassSenate

Active Military & Veterans

Signed into Law

Supporting long-term care for veterans in Holyoke and across Massachusetts. This legislation advances the construction of a modern facility to meet the needs of future generations of veterans. In addition to \$400 million in bonds authorized for the design and construction of a new veteran's home facility in Holyoke, this legislation authorizes the issuance of \$200 million in bonds to increase geographic equity and accessibility related to the continuum of long-term care services for veterans across the state. This legislation also includes Project Labor Agreement (PLA) language that mandates a pre-bid, pre-hire labor agreement for the construction of the new facility in Holyoke, which will ensure that the workforce is local, diverse, inclusive, well-trained, safe, and skilled.

*An Act financing the reconstruction of the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke ([H.3770](#)) was passed over a veto into law on **July 1, 2021**, as **Chapter 15** of the **Acts of 2021**.*

Restructuring the chain of command at Holyoke and Chelsea and improving oversight to prevent future tragedy. This legislation ensures that both the Holyoke and Chelsea Veterans' homes are federally licensed as health care facilities, mandates increased state management, and provides independent oversight and accountability of veterans' homes management. Among the many provisions of this legislation, it creates a new Cabinet-level Secretary of Veterans' Services position and establishes an independent Office of the Veteran Advocate to guarantee veterans residing in the state are always receiving services in a humane and dignified manner. The legislation also creates the position of ombudsperson for each veterans' home to advocate on behalf of the residents and staff at the home. This legislation follows continued scrutiny of administrative failures at the veterans' home in Holyoke that led to the tragic deaths of 77 veterans during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic and builds on recommendations made by the Special Joint Oversight Committee on the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke COVID-19 Outbreak, which investigated that tragedy.

*An Act relative to the governance, structure and care of veterans at the Commonwealth's veterans' homes ([H.5106](#)) was signed into law on **August 4, 2022**, as **Chapter 144** of the **Acts of 2022**.*

Supporting military families who relocate to Massachusetts through the SPEED Act. This legislation would speed up the professional licensure process for military spouses to ensure they can continue their careers, allow for advanced and virtual enrollment for military children to prevent disruptions in education, provide in-state tuition continuity for military-connected college students, and establish a Purple Star Campus designation to identify public schools that show a major commitment to military families. The act also supports veterans exposed to burn pits, including by offering periodic health assessments to members of the Massachusetts National Guard and registering members of the armed forces, national guard, and veterans in the Department of Veterans Affairs' Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry. The SPEED Act would also help Massachusetts meet criteria used by the Department of Defense and military officials when considering basing assignments and federal investments for military installations, among other measures.

*An Act relative to military spouse-licensure portability, education and enrollment of dependents ([S.3075](#)) was signed into law on **August 5, 2022**, as **Chapter 154** of the **Acts of 2022**.*

Commemorating the history of the Navy Seabees. This legislation designates March 5, which is the date on which the United States Naval Construction Battalions (better known as the “Navy Seabees”) were founded, as United States Navy Seabees Day in the Commonwealth.

An Act designating March 5 as United States Navy Seabees Day ([S.3159](#)) was signed into law on **January 4, 2023**, as **Chapter 380 of the Acts of 2022**.

Passed by the Senate

Ensuring that retired veterans can access available retirement benefits. This legislation would give veterans who enter public service additional time to purchase their military service time for retirement purposes. Currently, veterans must “purchase” military service within 180 days upon entering public service to increase their retirement benefits, while this bill would extend that deadline to a year after vesting—effectively, 11 years. The bill would also create a 1-year grace period to allow veterans who had previously missed their initial opportunity to complete a buyback. In addition, the bill also requires that all veterans be notified of the program going forward.

An Act relative to veterans’ buyback ([H.5051](#)) was **passed by the Senate** on **January 3, 2022**.

Budget Appropriations & Additional Policy Related to Active Military & Veterans

Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Highlights

- \$97.3 million for a variety of veterans services and programs overseen by the Department of Veterans’ Services (DVS)
- \$2 million in for veterans’ mental and behavioral health supports through Mass General’s Home Base Program
- \$600,000 for the women veterans’ outreach program
- \$200,000 for an independent, impartial ombudsperson at Holyoke Soldiers’ home

July 2021 Supplemental Budget Highlights

- \$13 million for National Guard activations, including pandemic-related work
- \$5.4 million for the Chelsea and Holyoke Soldiers’ Homes for pandemic-related costs

December 2021 ARPA Bill Highlights

- \$150 million for supportive housing, with priority for veterans, including \$20 million for supportive housing for veterans located across the state in areas not primarily served by either the Chelsea or Holyoke Soldiers’ Homes
- \$1.5 million of state financial support to the Massachusetts Military Support Foundation, Inc. for empowerment centers that distribute food services to veterans in need
- \$500,000 for transportation for participants in the Massachusetts Veterans’ Treatment Courts to reduce regional inequities and provide services to veterans across the state

Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Policy Highlights

Authorizing the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) to issue distinctive registration plates, free of charge, for Medal of Liberty recipients

December 2021 ARPA Bill Policy Highlights

Ensuring that the Massachusetts Medal of Liberty can be awarded to service men and women who have died as a result of training accidents while in the line of duty

April 2022 Supplemental Budget Policy Highlights

Extending COVID-19 related bonuses for members of the Massachusetts National Guard

Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Highlights

- \$95.2 million for veterans' services and programs overseen by the Department of Veterans' Services
- \$79 million for the Soldiers' Homes, including continued funding for the independent ombudsperson at the Holyoke Soldiers' Home
- \$2 million in mental and behavioral health supports through Mass General's Home Base Program
- \$626,490 for the women veterans' outreach program

Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Policy Highlights

- Establishing a veteran equality review board to ensure that veterans dishonorably discharged under 'Don't Ask Don't Tell' receive state-based veterans' benefits
- Increasing to \$200,000 the amount that the Commonwealth will pay to surviving family members in instances where a National Guard member dies as a result of fulfilling their duties

July 2022 Economic Development Bill Policy Highlights (Passed by the Senate)

Supporting the Commonwealth's veterans by increasing the annual payment for disabled veterans and their surviving families to \$3,000

MassSenate

Equity, Access & Inclusion

Signed into Law

Creating a Women's Rights History Trail in Massachusetts. This legislation creates a Women's Rights History Trail to celebrate the rich history of the women's rights movement and contributions women have made across the Commonwealth. It creates a task force responsible for soliciting public input and conducting research to recommend sites, properties, and attractions that are historically and thematically associated with the struggle for women's rights and women's suffrage and reflect Massachusetts' geographic and demographic diversity. The bill also requires the inclusion of accomplishments of women veterans in the trail, as well as recommendations for increasing the representation of women in the artwork of the State House. Members of the task force would include representatives from the Massachusetts Historical Society, the Commission on the Status of Women, and the Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators, among others.

An Act relative to the creation of a women's rights history trail ([S.2802](#))
was signed into law on **May 26, 2022**, as **Chapter 76 of the Acts of 2022**.

Allowing all immigrants to safely move throughout Massachusetts communities through the Work and Family Mobility Act. This legislation would allow Massachusetts residents who lack federal immigration status to apply for a Massachusetts standard driver's license, which does not include a REAL ID. Under this law, the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) is prevented from inquiring about immigration status when processing an application for a Massachusetts driver's license or registration. The RMV will provide driver's licenses to residents who provide required documents to prove their identity, pass the corresponding driver tests, and meet all other eligibility criteria.

An Act relative to work and family mobility ([H.4805](#))
was passed over a veto into law on **July 9, 2022**, as **Chapter 81** of the **Acts of 2022**.

Honoring Black history through Negro Election Day. This legislation designates the third Saturday in July as Negro Election Day, officially recognizing a holiday celebrated by Massachusetts' Black community. Negro Election Day honors an election process originating in 1740 among Salem's enslaved African community.

An Act to establish the third Saturday in July as Negro Election Day ([S.2703](#))
was signed into law on **July 25, 2022**, as **Chapter 108 of the Acts of 2022**.

Preventing discrimination against natural and protective hairstyles through the CROWN Act. This legislation prohibits discrimination based on hairstyles by incorporating hair texture, hair type and protective hairstyle into the definition of race in the Massachusetts General Laws (MGL). The protection means that no workplace, school district, school committee, public school, nonsectarian school, or any equivalent school organization can adopt or implement policies that would impair or prohibit a natural or protective hairstyle that has been historically associated with one's race.

An Act Prohibiting Discrimination Based on Natural and Protective Hairstyles ([H.4554](#))
was signed into law on **July 26, 2022**, as **Chapter 117 of the Acts of 2022**.

Allowing minors to access HIV prevention medication. This legislation, originally included in the FY23 budget and subsequently passed again after an amendment from the Governor, would allow individuals under the age of 18 to access life-saving HIV prevention medication, such as pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) or postexposure prophylaxis (PEP). In addition, this bill allows public health clinics that provide treatment for venereal diseases to also provide preventive care for HIV.

An Act relative to HIV prevention services ([H.5115](#))
was signed into law on **August 3, 2022**, as **Chapter 136 of the Acts of 2022**.

Giving adoptees access to their birth certificates. This legislation ensures that all adoptees can access their original birth certificate. Previously, an adopted person born between July 17, 1974 and January 1, 2008 could not access their birth certificate without obtaining a court order. This legislation would close this gap and allow adopted individuals over the age of 18 or the adoptive parents of a child under 18 to access the adoptee's original birth certificate.

An Act granting equal access to original birth certificates to all persons born in Massachusetts ([H.2294](#))
was signed into law on **August 5, 2022**, as **Chapter 158 of the Acts of 2022**.

Supporting equity in the cannabis industry. This legislation helps members of communities disproportionately harmed by marijuana prohibition and enforcement to take part in the Commonwealth's growing cannabis market through the creation of a new social equity fund and improvements to the local licensing process. The fund would facilitate new access to capital by making grants and loans to social equity program participants and economic empowerment priority applicants and would be sustained through by fifteen per cent of the revenue collected from the existing marijuana excise tax. The bill strengthens the host community agreement process and clarifies that fees must be reasonably related to the costs associated with hosting a cannabis business in a city or town, and clarifies procedures for permitting social consumption sites. Notably, the bill requires courts to order the expungement of an individual's marijuana offense within 30 days of that individual making an expungement request.

An Act relative to equity in the cannabis industry ([S.3096](#))
was signed into law on **August 11, 2022**, as **Chapter 180 of the Acts of 2022**.

Commemorating Massachusetts Emancipation Day. This legislation designates July 8 as Massachusetts Emancipation Day, also known as Quock Walker Day. Massachusetts Emancipation Day commemorates the life of Walker, who was born to enslaved African parents in Massachusetts and was the driving force behind the 1783 Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruling that slavery was incompatible with the constitution of the Commonwealth.

An Act designating July 8 as Massachusetts Emancipation Day, also known as Quock Walker Day ([S.3117](#))
was signed into law on **November 1, 2022**, as **Chapter 255 of the Acts of 2022**.

Passed by the Senate

Creating a non-binary option on driver's licenses and birth certificates. This legislation provides for a non-binary option other than male or female on birth certificates and drivers licenses, and would also direct the state to begin the process of allowing a non-binary option for all state forms and instances where a gender choice is required. For birth records, the gender listed could be changed by an adult, an emancipated minor, or the parent or guardian of a minor. The gender designations on a birth record could include 'female', 'male' or 'X'— which indicates that the person is another gender or an undesignated gender. No documentation beyond a self-attestation is required to make a change.

An Act relative to gender identity on Massachusetts identification ([S.2540](#))
was **passed by the Senate** on **September 23, 2021**.

Updating juvenile bail procedure to allow certain youth with pending cases to stay out of jail. This legislation overhauls bail requirements for juveniles in the Commonwealth. The bill waives the \$40 bail fee for juveniles and allows courts to accept a promise from a juvenile's parents that the child will return to court as an alternative to bail, subject to the discretion of courtroom administrators, with the Commonwealth covering any costs that result from bail not being taken. The bill clarifies that the bail magistrate, a neutral party, would have the sole authority to make a bail determination. This bill also modernizes how bail is administered allowing payments to be made virtually and ensures that bail magistrates are notified of a juvenile's arrest even if the court with jurisdiction over the offense is not currently in session, preventing a juvenile from being kept in detention unnecessarily.

An Act updating bail procedures for justice involved youth ([S.2943](#))
was **passed by the Senate** on **June 29, 2022**.

Encouraging juvenile diversion to direct convicted youth to community service instead of prison. This legislation builds on the 2018 criminal justice legislation championed the Senate, which allows youth cases to be diverted from the criminal courts to community service, by expanding the list of crimes for which a juvenile could be required to do community service as an alternative to prison. Juvenile diversion allows cases to be resolved without establishing a criminal record. A given individual's eligibility for diversion would be determined on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the presiding judge of the juvenile court.

An Act promoting diversion of juveniles to community supervision and services ([S.2987](#))
was **passed by the Senate** on **June 30, 2022**.

Raising the burden of proof required for civil asset forfeiture. This legislation requires that law enforcement or prosecutors prove, by a preponderance of the evidence, that property seized is in fact subject to civil asset forfeiture under Massachusetts law, rather than having owners prove that their property was wrongly seized. Forfeiture hearings would include accused individuals' legal counsel and could be delayed until after the outcome of any related criminal trial, so that if the accused is found to be innocent, seized assets would be returned without delay. This bill also prohibits the forfeiture of items taken valued at \$250 or less.

An Act relative to forfeiture reform ([S.2944](#))
was **passed by the Senate** on **June 30, 2022**.

Increasing access to HIV prevention medication. This legislation would increase access to the life-saving HIV prevention medication pre-exposure prophylaxis, commonly known as PrEP, by allowing pharmacists to prescribe it to patients on a short-term basis. The bill requires that pharmacists who prescribe PrEP work with the patient’s primary care provider to ensure that the patient receives ongoing support.

*An Act enabling pharmacists to prescribe, dispense and administer PrEP ([S.2955](#))
was **passed by the Senate** on **June 30, 2022**.*

Repealing archaic and anti-LGBTQIA+ laws. This legislation would repeal archaic laws that intrude on an individual’s privacy regarding sexual activity, including existing statutes that criminalize sodomy and so-called ‘unnatural’ acts between consenting adults. In addition, the bill would continue the process of modernizing the Commonwealth’s laws by establishing a permanent law revision commission with the power to recommend laws for repeal to the legislature.

*An Act relative to archaic laws ([S.2979](#))
was **passed by the Senate** on **June 30, 2022**.*

Budget Appropriations & Additional Policy Related to Equity, Access to Justice & Civil Rights

July 2021 Supplemental Budget Highlights

- \$12.5 million for costs associated with the implementation of the 2020 police reform bill
- \$5 million for start-up costs associated with the new Peace Officer Standards & Training (POST) Commission
- \$1 million for the Supplier Diversity Office (SDO)

December 2021 ARPA Bill Highlights

- \$50 million for equitable and affordable broadband access and infrastructure improvements to close the digital divide
- \$25 million for youth-at-risk supports and grant programs for community violence prevention and re-entry organizations, focused on communities disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic
- \$37.5 million for the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund to support organizations working with people displaced from jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic, historically underserved populations, and individuals reentering their communities from the corrections system
- \$25 million to support tree planting programs in Gateway Cities
- \$20 million for the resettlement of Afghan evacuees and Haitian evacuees
- \$7.5 million for community colleges to train underserved populations for green jobs
- \$5 million for the Disabled Persons Protection Commission to study and review the interrelationship between service-providing agencies for individuals with disabilities within the Commonwealth and design and implement a system for an interconnected network that will provide a continuum of care

April 2022 Supplemental Budget

- \$10 million for the Office of Immigrants and Refugees (ORI) to support the resettlement of Ukrainian evacuees
- \$500,000 to build the capacity of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women (MCSW)

July 2022 Judiciary Bond Bill Highlights

- \$95 million to establish digital courthouses and courtrooms
- \$35.5 million to modernize technology for court administrative operations
- \$35 million to establish modern security systems in the judiciary

November 2022 Economic Development Bill Highlights

\$20 million to bridge impending federal cuts to Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) programs and maintain critical victim service programs

Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Policy Highlights

- Eliminating probation and parole fees, reducing the burden on individuals during their re-entry process
- Increasing by 10 percent the benefit payments to recipients of Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) and Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled and Children (EAEDC) to ensure that families have the economic supports necessary to provide stability to families across the state
- Making a record investment in the annual child's clothing allowance, providing \$400 per child for eligible families to buy clothes for the upcoming school year
- Requiring the state to develop one common application where residents can apply for a variety of government-provided benefits
- Establishing a veteran equality review board to ensure that veterans dishonorably discharged under 'Don't Ask Don't Tell' receive state-based veterans' benefits
- *(Passed by the Legislature)* Removing barriers to communication services for incarcerated persons and their loved ones by requiring the Department of Correction (DOC) and sheriffs to provide phone calls and electronic communications free of charge to those receiving and initiating calls
- *(Passed by the Legislature)* Establishing a new requirement that commissary items in correctional facilities shall not be sold at more than 3 per cent over the purchase cost

July 2022 Judiciary Bond Bill Additional Policy Highlights

- Expanding the definition of sexual assault counselor to include a person who is under the supervision of a licensed mental health counselor to improve protections for victims of sexual violence
- Updating and clarifying the Homestead statute to better protect homeowners who reasonably believed they had homestead protections

MassSenate

Public K-12, Early & Higher Education

Signed into Law

Promoting student nutrition through increased access to school meals. This legislation helps school districts and schools, where a majority of students are low-income, to enroll in federal programs—known as the Community Eligibility Provision and Provision 2—to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students. This bill minimizes families’ meal debt by requiring school districts to maximize federal revenues and direct the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to assist them in doing so. When students do accrue debt, it requires school districts to determine whether they are eligible for free- or reduced-price meals. Finally, this bill prohibits schools from targeting students who carry meal-related debt with punitive practices, banning so called ‘meal-shaming.’

An Act to promote student nutrition ([H.3999](#))
was signed into law on **October 14, 2021**, as **Chapter 62 of the Acts of 2021**.

Educating students on genocide and human rights. In response to growing concerns regarding anti-Semitic incidences in the Commonwealth, this legislation requires every middle school and high school in the Commonwealth to include instruction on the history of genocide. This bill establishes a Genocide Education Trust Fund to promote and educate middle and high school students on the history of genocide. Funds in this trust will be used for the instruction of middle and high school students on the history of genocide and to ensure the development of curricular materials, as well as to provide professional development training to assist educators in the teaching of genocide.

An Act concerning genocide education ([S.2557](#))
was signed into law on **December 2, 2021**, as **Chapter 98 of the Acts of 2021**.

Improving school operational efficiency. This legislation improves efficiency for school districts by updating the Uniform Procurement Act to reduce bidding requirements for projects under \$100,000.

An Act relative to school operational efficiency ([H.596](#))
was signed into law on **August 26, 2022**, as **Chapter 198 of the Acts of 2022**.

Recognizing ‘School Custodian Day’. This legislation designates October 2nd as School Custodian Day, in recognition of the dedicated contributions provided by school custodians to the Commonwealth. The bill would make Massachusetts one of the first states to join the national movement to create a custodial workers’ recognition day.

An Act relative to the observance of School Custodian Day ([S.2126](#))
was signed into law on **December 28, 2022**, as **Chapter 326 of the Acts of 2022**.

Passed by the Senate

Providing students with age-appropriate, medically accurate and inclusive sex education. This legislation requires school districts that offer sex education to follow certain guidelines to ensure students are provided with age-appropriate, medically accurate, and comprehensive information. Additionally, the bill requires reporting by school districts on the details of their sex education curricula and, to ensure that the state's comprehensive health curriculum framework is appropriately updated. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) would also be required to review the framework at least every ten years.

*An Act relative to healthy youth ([S.2541](#))
was **passed by the Senate** on **September 23, 2021**.*

Transforming access to high-quality affordable early education and child care. This legislation will transform early education and child care in the Commonwealth by making it more accessible and affordable for families, providing high-quality care for young children, strengthening early education providers, improving compensation and professional development for the early education workforce, and addressing the workforce needs of Massachusetts employers. The bill empowers the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) to establish a permanent operational grant program for providers, develop a methodology for determining the actual cost of care for providers, and create a career ladder with recommended salaries and benefits for early educators that are commensurate with K-12 educators. This bill also codifies and expands eligibility for the child care subsidy program and establishes early educator scholarship and loan forgiveness programs.

*An Act to expand access to high-quality, affordable early education and care ([S.2997](#))
was **passed by the Senate** on **July 7, 2022**.*

Prohibiting license revocation for student loan debt. This legislation prohibits any individual from having their professional or occupational certificate, registration, license, or authority revoked because they have defaulted on an educational loan.

*An Act prohibiting license revocation for student loan default ([H.4339](#))
was **passed by the Senate** on **July 26, 2022**.*

Budget Appropriations & Additional Policy Related to Public K-12, Early & Higher Education

Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Highlights

- \$5.503 billion in Chapter 70 funding to Massachusetts school districts to implement the first year of the state's landmark Student Opportunity Act (SOA)
- \$820 million for the early education sector, including:
 - \$20 million to increase rates for early education providers
 - \$15 million for Massachusetts Head Start programs
 - \$10 million for the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative to expand public preschool
 - \$9 million to cover the cost of fees for parents receiving subsidized early education in calendar year 2021
- \$571 million for the University of Massachusetts system
- \$373.3 million for the Special Education Circuit Breaker, reimbursing school districts for the high cost of educating students with disabilities at the statutorily required 75% reimbursement rate
- \$350 million for the new Student Opportunity Act Investment fund to be utilized in the coming years for the implementation of the Student Opportunity Act
- \$315 million for community colleges
- \$291 million for state universities
- \$154.6 million for reimbursing school districts at 75% for costs incurred when students leave to attend charter schools
- \$130 million in scholarships
- \$82.2 million for regional school transportation
- \$50 million for Adult Basic Education
- \$40 million in reserve to provide additional aid to districts experiencing increases in student enrollment compared to October 2020
- \$27.9 million for the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO) program
- \$10.5 million for the community college SUCCESS Fund
- \$4.75 million for the STEM Starter Academy
- \$4 million for rural school aid

July 2021 Supplemental Budget Highlights

- \$131 million for early educator stabilization grants, workforce support and technology upgrades
- \$60 million for direct grants to state-subsidized early education and childcare providers

October 2021 Supplemental Budget Highlights

\$20 million for Massachusetts approved special education schools to address the impacts of COVID-19

December 2021 ARPA Bill Highlights

- \$100 million to improve indoor air quality in schools and support healthy learning environments for public school districts with high concentrations of low-income students, English language learners, and communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19
- \$75 million for capital and maintenance projects for higher education
- \$25 million for the Endowment Incentive Program at the University of Massachusetts, state universities and community colleges
- \$25 million for youth summer and school-year jobs
- \$20 million for special education, including \$10 million for workforce development
- \$10 million for programs focused on recruiting and retaining educators of color

April 2022 Supplemental Budget Highlights

\$140 million for Special Education schools operating under Chapter 766 to fill immediate staffing needs

Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Highlights

- \$6 billion in Chapter 70 funding to Massachusetts school districts, implementing the second year of the state's landmark Student Opportunity Act (SOA)
- \$1.18 billion for the early education and care sector, including:
 - \$250 million to continue monthly stabilization grants to early education and care providers
 - \$60 million for increased reimbursement rates for early educators
 - \$25 million to address various other recommendations from the Special Legislative Commission on Early Education and Care Economic Review
 - \$16.5 million for grants to the Head Start program to maintain access to early education services for low-income families
 - \$15 million for the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative to expand access to pre-kindergarten and preschool opportunities in underserved areas
- \$670 million for the University of Massachusetts system
- \$441 million for the Special Education Circuit Breaker, reimbursing school districts for the high cost of educating students with disabilities at the statutorily required 75 per cent reimbursement rate
- \$352 million for community colleges
- \$328 million for state universities
- \$244 million for reimbursing school districts at 75 per cent for costs incurred when students leave to attend charter schools
- \$175 million in scholarship funding
- \$175 million for a newly created High-Quality Early Education and Care Affordability Trust Fund
- \$110 million for a year-long extension of universal school meals, providing immediate relief to working families by saving them up to \$1,200 every year from reduced grocery expenditures
- \$82.2 million for regional school transportation
- \$23 million for homeless student transportation
- \$14 million for the community colleges SUCCESS Fund
- \$4.75 million STEM Starter Academy
- \$4 million in flexible resources for the public higher education system to support inclusive learning options for this diverse student population
- \$1.5 million for the Genocide Education Trust Fund, fulfilling our commitment to fund efforts to educate middle and high school students on the history of genocide and support implementation efforts in accordance with Chapter 98 of the Acts of 2021, *An Act Concerning Genocide Education*, passed by the Legislature in 2021

November 2022 Economic Development Bill Highlights

- \$150 million for early education and care providers through the continuation of the Commonwealth Cares for our Children (C3) stabilization grant program, including \$60 million for subsidized providers
- \$50 million to promote the attainment of debt-free higher education for students pursuing careers in high-demand industries, such as health care, education, and cybersecurity
- \$2.5 million for a grant program to increase the nursing workforce talent pipeline and improve career pathways for the nursing profession
- \$2.5 million for computer science teacher development
- \$1 million for grants to support the planning of pathways in technology early college high school programs

Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Policy Highlights

- Establishing a task force to analyze the long-term affordability of higher education in the Commonwealth and its impacts on the spectrum of higher education institutions
- Extending the priority deadline for the MassGrant scholarship program, giving applicants more time to apply
- Requiring that the federal funds reporting website includes school spending of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) fund allocations
- Directing Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to conduct a study to evaluate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the delivery of educational services and supports to marginalized students
- Establishing a special legislative commission on school-based health centers and a task force on the affordability of higher education

Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Policy Highlights

- Doubling minimum Chapter 70 aid from \$30 to \$60 per pupil
- Codifying the Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment grant program and expanding opportunities at public colleges and universities for individuals with disabilities.
- Permitting Community Colleges to use existing appropriations for courses taught in the evening and over the summers
- Exempting forgiven student loans from being taxed as gross income
- Recapitalizing and expanding the “Tomorrow’s Educators Program” to help address the critical need to grow and diversify the educator workforce by appropriating \$7.5 million to provide scholarships and student debt-relief to expand the number of licensed educators, especially educators-of-color
- Increasing the facilities component of the charter school reimbursement formula from a minimum of \$893 per pupil to a minimum of \$1,088 per pupil in fiscal year 2023
- Establishing and directing \$175 million toward a High-Quality Early Education & Care Affordability Fund, to be used to promote stability, access, and quality in the early education and care field

July 2022 Economic Development Bill Policy Highlights (Passed by the Senate)

- Ensuring students can obtain academic transcripts for the courses they have completed and paid for, rather than having their entire transcript withheld for outstanding fees
- Establishing a Hunger-Free Campus Initiative to address food insecurity on college campuses

MassSenate

Mental Health, Public Health & Health Care

Signed into Law

Expanding protections for reproductive and gender-affirming health care. This legislation provides legal protections to abortion and gender-affirming care providers, out-of-state patients, and insurers; expands access to contraceptives; and helps ensure that women who face certain serious diagnoses after 24 weeks of pregnancy are not forced to leave Massachusetts to access reproductive health care services. It requires insurance coverage for abortion and abortion-related care without being subject to deductibles, coinsurance, copayments, or other cost-sharing requirements. In addition, the legislation requires MassHealth to cover pre-natal, childbirth, and post-partum care without charging any deductibles, coinsurance, copayments, or other cost-sharing requirements. This legislation updates the 2020 ROE Act to ensure that patients over 24 weeks of pregnancy are able to receive an abortion in Massachusetts because of a grave fetal diagnosis that indicates the fetus is incompatible with sustained life outside of the uterus without extraordinary medical interventions and requires that those decisions be made between the patient and their treating physician. Related to contraceptives, the bill directs the Department of Public Health (DPH) to issue a statewide standing order to pharmacists to dispense emergency contraception, clarifies that vending machines can be used to dispense Plan B pills, and ensures access to medication abortion on all public college and university campuses.

*An Act expanding protections for reproductive and gender-affirming care ([H.5090](#)) was signed into law on **July 29, 2022**, as **Chapter 127 of the Acts of 2022**.*

Addressing barriers to care through the Mental Health ABC Act 2.0. Recognizing that mental health is as important as physical health, this landmark legislation implements a wide variety of reforms to provide patients with equitable access to mental health care and removes barriers to care by supporting the behavioral health workforce. This bill mandates coverage for an annual mental health wellness exam and requires an equitable rate floor for evaluation and management services consistent with primary care. The bill provides with better tools to enforce mental health parity laws by creating a clear structure to receive and investigate parity complaints, increasing reporting and oversight requirements on insurance carriers' mental health care coverage processes and policies, and establishing reasonable penalties and alternative remedies for failure to comply with the law. MassHealth and commercial insurance companies would follow a uniform set of criteria, established by mental health experts, for determining medical necessity. Additional issues addressed include the state's emergency department boarding crisis, emergency service programs, cultural competency in care, a newly created standard release form for patients, and care in geographically isolated areas.

*An Act addressing barriers to care for mental health ([S.3097](#)) was signed into law on **August 10, 2022**, as **Chapter 177 of the Acts of 2022**.*

Ensuring patient safety by limiting the use of step therapy. This legislation gives health care providers more leverage in determining the most effective treatment options for patients, saving patients expensive and painful regimens on medications they know to be ineffective or harmful. It does so by limiting step therapy, or ‘fail first’ protocols that too often direct patients to cheaper medications rather than those more suitable to treat their condition. This bill builds on similar legislation passed by the Senate in 2020.

An Act relative to step therapy and patient safety ([H.4929](#))
was signed into law on **November 1, 2022**, as **Chapter 254 of the Acts of 2022**.

Designating annual awareness days for medical issues. The Senate led in passing legislation designating: the last day in February as Rare Disease Day, May 6 as Moyamoya Disease Awareness Day, and October 18 as Inflammatory Breast Cancer Awareness Day. These recognitions support patients experiencing these conditions, as well as their families, caregivers, healthcare professionals, and researchers.

An Act designating the last day of February as rare disease day in the Commonwealth ([H.3101](#))
was signed into law on **December 28, 2022**, as **Chapter 328 of the Acts of 2022**.

An Act designating May 6 as Moyamoya Disease Awareness Day ([H.3211](#))
was signed into law on **December 29, 2022**, as **Chapter 339 of the Acts of 2022**.

An Act designating inflammatory breast cancer awareness day ([H.3147](#))
was signed into law on **January 4, 2022**, as **Chapter 359 of the Acts of 2022**.

Reviewing best practices to prevent falls among older adults. This legislation updates the statutory language for the Commonwealth's commission on falls preventions, to ensure that the commission is able to accomplish its goal of reducing the number of falls by older adults.

An Act further regulating the Commission on Falls Prevention ([S.1446](#))
was signed into law on **December 29, 2022**, as **Chapter 343 of the Acts of 2022**.

Addressing the crisis in maternal health outcomes. This legislation ensures that postpartum mothers and birthing people get necessary and potentially life-saving health care by extending MassHealth insurance coverage to 12 months after the end of pregnancy. The Secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services would be directed to maximize federal financial participation for coverage and benefits of eligible pregnant and postpartum residents. Access to vital physical and behavioral health resources is expected to decrease mortality and severe morbidity and to improve the overall health outcomes for new parents and their children, especially for low-income and minority populations.

An Act relative to expanding equitable access to maternal postpartum care ([S.2731](#))
was signed into law on **January 5, 2023**, as **Chapter 436 of the Acts of 2022**.

Passed by the Senate

Ensuring that life-saving medications are affordable, fairly priced and accessible for all consumers through the PACT Act 2022. The PACT Act 2022 directs the Health Policy Commission (HPC), in consultation with stakeholders, to establish a process for identifying high-cost drug price thresholds that pose a public health risk. In addition, it allows the HPC to recommend pricing measures to increase patient access to necessary medications. Drug manufacturers that fail to comply with this process will be required to pay a fee that will go into a trust fund for a new drug cost assistance program to support patients with certain chronic health conditions that disproportionately impact marginalized communities. The PACT Act 2022 also limits out-of-pocket spending on insulin by eliminating deductibles and coinsurance, and permanently capping co-pays at \$25 per 30-day supply. If the PACT Act 2022 is signed into law, Massachusetts would join 21 other states that cap co-pays for insulin.

*An Act relative to pharmaceutical access, costs and transparency ([S.2695](#))
was **passed by the Senate** on **February 15, 2022**.*

Providing free menstrual products in public places. The legislation provides for free menstrual products in certain public places, including schools, correctional facilities, and shelters and other temporary housing. Menstrual products would be required to be provided to recipients at no cost and in a convenient and non-stigmatizing way.

*An Act to increase access to disposable menstrual products in prisons, homeless shelters, and public schools ([S.2730](#))
was **passed by the Senate** on **March 3, 2022**.*

Bringing awareness to fibromuscular dysplasia. This legislation designates March as Fibromuscular Dysplasia Awareness Month.

*An Act designating March as Fibromuscular Dysplasia Awareness Month ([S.2789](#))
was **passed by the Senate** on **March 17, 2022**.*

Requiring certification for technicians handling medical equipment. This legislation would require central service technicians who practice in Massachusetts hospitals to receive standardized certification through a nationally accredited organization, impacting an estimated 1,800 technicians operating in hospitals throughout the state who are charged with the disassembling, cleaning and sanitization of medical tools and equipment used in surgery and other highly sensitive medical operations.

*An Act regulating central service technicians ([S.2933](#))
was **passed by the Senate** on **June 9, 2022**.*

Strengthening local public health services through the SAPHE Act 2.0. This legislation would address disparities in local and regional public health systems by encouraging wider technical coordination among Massachusetts' 351 separate boards of health, establishing common standards among these boards, and ensuring that these boards of health are funded equitably. The bill also directs the Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to provide core public health educational and training opportunities and technical assistance to municipal and regional public health officials, helping to prevent boards from being unable to access health expertise from a credentialed member of the public health workforce. This legislation implements the unanimous recommendations of the Special Commission on Local and Regional Public Health and of the Joint Committee on COVID-19 and Emergency Preparedness and Management's July 2022 report.

An Act relative to accelerating improvements to the local and regional public health system to address disparities in the delivery of public health services ([H.5104](#)) was passed by the Senate on July 29, 2022.

Reducing the risk of overdose by providing opioid patients with life-saving medication. This legislation would require doctors to prescribe naloxone, an emergency treatment which can rapidly and temporarily reverse opioid overdoses, to patients receiving opioids or who otherwise have increased risk of an overdose. Naloxone has been shown to be a safe and effective treatment easily administered by non-medical professionals.

An Act to expand access to Naloxone ([S.3182](#)) was passed by the Senate on January 3, 2023.

Budget Appropriations & Additional Policy Related to Mental Health, Public Health & Health Care

Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Highlights

- \$18.98 billion for MassHealth, providing over 2 million of the Commonwealth's children, seniors, and low-income residents access to comprehensive health care coverage
- \$175.6 million for substance use disorder and intervention services provided by the Bureau of Substance Addiction Services
- \$98.4 million for children's mental health services, including \$3.9 million for the Massachusetts Child Psychiatric Access Program (MCPAP) and MCPAP for Moms to address mental health needs of pregnant and postpartum women
- \$40.8 million for early intervention services, to ensure supports is available to infants and young toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities, including funds to support health equity initiatives
- \$12.5 million to support a student telebehavioral health pilot, public awareness campaigns, loan forgiveness for mental health clinicians, and initiatives to mitigate emergency department boardings for individuals in need of behavioral health support
- \$10 million for Programs of Assertive Community Treatment (PACT) grants to provide intensive, community-based behavioral health services for adolescents
- \$6 million for Social Emotional Learning (SEL) grants to help K-12 schools bolster social emotional learning supports for students, including \$1 million for a new pilot program to provide mental health screenings for K-12 students
- \$5 million for a loan forgiveness program for mental health professionals
- \$3 million for a pediatric chronic rehabilitation long-term care hospital, to compensate for high-complexity pediatric care

- \$3 million for a loan repayment assistance program for child and adolescent psychiatrists at community health centers
- \$2.5 million to address the emergency department behavioral health boarding crisis through staffing investments and rate incentives associated with fully operationalizing inpatient mental health acute care beds

July 2021 Supplemental Budget Highlights

- \$31.9 million for the Medical Assistance Trust Fund
- \$7.8 million for home health aide rate increases

December 2021 ARPA Bill Highlights

- \$400 million in mental and behavioral health supports, including:
 - \$122 million for workforce loan repayment programs for behavioral health and substance use professionals
 - \$7 million for the expansion of behavioral health urgent care services at community health centers to address the behavioral health crisis
 - \$5 million to establish an online portal to facilitate the coordination of services for children, adolescents and adults who are being boarded in emergency departments who have mental and behavioral health needs
- \$300 million for the Home and Community-Based Services Federal Investment Fund to address workforce needs for those caring for vulnerable populations
- \$200.1 million to support the state's local and regional public health infrastructure
- \$50 million for nursing facilities, including \$25 million for capital support to increase the quality of patient care and \$25 million for workforce initiatives
- \$44.8 million for food security infrastructure, including:
 - \$17 million for the Greater Boston Food Bank for regional food security network improvements across the Commonwealth
 - \$5 million for the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts
 - \$2 million for the Massachusetts Food Trust Program to provide loans, grants and technical assistance in a regionally equitable manner to communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19
 - \$1.92 million for Project Bread to better connect eligible unenrolled residents with federal nutrition programs statewide
 - \$1 million for the Massachusetts Military Support Foundation, Inc. for the operation of empowerment centers and to support the distribution of food to veterans in need
- \$30 million to support a robust and diverse home health care and human service workforce through recruitment, retention, and loan forgiveness programming
- \$10 million to expand the number of inpatient psychiatric beds for youth in psychiatric crisis
- \$2 million for unreimbursed COVID-19 costs for Early Intervention (EI) providers
- \$500,000 to establish transportation services for participants in the Massachusetts Veterans' Treatment Courts

April 2022 Supplemental Budget Highlights

- \$346 million for Home- and Community-Based Services (HCBS) to ensure that eligible Medicaid users throughout the Commonwealth receive health care and medical services in their own homes or local communities
- \$55 million to support reimbursement rates for human and social service providers doing crucial work during the COVID-19 pandemic
- \$24 million for the creation of new behavioral health and substance use disorder treatment beds
- \$10 million for suicide prevention and intervention services, focused on staffing and other resources at crisis centers, and the establishment of a statewide 988 suicide prevention hotline

- \$5 million for the Department of Mental Health to expand clientele housing support
- \$1.8 million for mental health services for international evacuees resettled in the Commonwealth

Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Highlights

- \$19.48 billion for MassHealth, ensuring over 2.1 million people with continued access to comprehensive health care services
- \$230 million for Chapter 257 rates for health and human service workers
- \$218.2 for substance use disorder and intervention services provided by the Bureau of Substance Addiction Services and a new Behavioral Health Access and Crisis Intervention Trust Fund
- \$113.1 million for children’s mental health services
- \$73 million to expand eligibility for the Medicare Savings Program to 225% of the federal poverty level
- \$50 million for a Connector Care Pilot Program to fund subsidized health insurance plans for members that are between 300%-500% of the federal poverty level for two years, thereby preparing for the transition of individuals from MassHealth to the Health Connector when the federal public health emergency ends
- \$48.8 million for early intervention services, to ensure increased supports for families with infants and young toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities
- \$40 million to continue higher rate add-ons and ensure a smaller wage cliff between FY22 and FY23 for home health aides and homemakers
- \$28.3 million for Family Resource Centers to grow and improve the mental health resources and programming available to families
- \$20 million to recapitalize the Behavioral Health, Access, Outreach and Support Trust Fund to support targeted behavioral health initiatives
- \$15 million for emergency department diversion initiatives for children, adolescents, and adults
- \$15 million for grants to support local and regional boards of health, continuing our efforts to build upon the successful State Action for Public Health Excellence (SAPHE) Program
- \$8.2 million to support student behavioral health services at the University of Massachusetts, state universities and community colleges
- \$6 million for Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Grants to help K-12 schools bolster SEL supports for students, including \$1 million to provide mental health screenings for K-12 students
- \$2 million in grants for improvements to reproductive health access, infrastructure, and safety, sending a strong and unequivocal message that reproductive and gender affirming health care will be protected in Massachusetts in the face of growing legal uncertainty across the United States after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*
- \$1 million for the Nursing and Allied Health Workforce Development program

November 2022 Economic Development Bill Highlights

- \$350 million for hospitals that have become fiscally strained during the COVID-19 pandemic
- \$225 million for rate increases for human service workers and providers
- \$195 million for nursing facilities and rest homes
- \$80 million for Community Health Centers
- \$16.5 million for reproductive and family planning services
- \$14 million for facilities that treat individuals with an alcohol or substance use disorder in the Commonwealth
- \$5 million to support harm reduction efforts and services to address substance use disorder in the Commonwealth
- \$2.5 million for grants to support the nursing workforce talent pipeline

Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Policy Highlights

- Directing the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to post data monthly on the availability of adult and pediatric beds at inpatient continuing care facilities under the department's supervision
- Requiring the Department of Public Health (DPH) to conduct an outreach campaign about the availability of 12-month supplies of contraceptives
- Establishing a Parkinson's disease registry and associated advisory committee to determine the incidence and prevalence of Parkinson's disease in the Commonwealth
- Authorizing the Department of Revenue (DOR), with a taxpayer's consent, to share information with the Health Connector for conducting targeted outreach to uninsured residents to discuss health coverage options available through the Connector
- Directing a new commission to study and make recommendations on how the Commonwealth can respond to the use of methamphetamines

Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Policy Highlights

- Expanding eligibility for Medicare Savings Programs by increasing the income limit from 165% to 225% of the federal poverty level
- Addressing the mental health crisis in Massachusetts by creating the Behavioral Health Access and Crisis Intervention Trust Fund, which will fund crisis supports and a new behavioral health crisis hotline
- Expanding the medication-assisted treatment pilot program for opioid use disorder to all sheriffs
- Increasing the department of correction's reporting requirement on medication-assisted treatment programs and re-entry treatment plans from annually to monthly
- Directing the executive office of health and human services (EOHHS) to produce an examination of the prescribing and treatment history fatal overdoses from 2019 to 2021
- Directing EOHHS to conduct a study on the retention of high-quality direct care staff in health care settings and issue a report on best practices
- Directing UMass Amherst, in consultation with EOHHS, to study the feasibility of establishing a Massachusetts school of health sciences education and center for health care workforce innovation at the Mount Ida campus
- Directing MassHealth to conduct a study on the provision of health care services for MassHealth enrollees with sickle cell disease and provide recommendations for improvements in the delivery of health care services to MassHealth enrollees with a diagnosis of sickle cell disease
- Extending the ability to use drug coupons through 2026
- Requiring the Health Policy Council to study and report on the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on behavioral health-related boarding in emergency departments
- Establishing a Chronic Kidney Disease task force that seeks to examine ways to reduce the occurrence of chronic kidney disease, identifies current barriers to adoption of best practices, and develops a plan for prevention, early screening, diagnosis and treatment, and further expands patient education and awareness to slow the progression of Chronic Kidney Disease
- Establishing a diverse special commission that would conduct a statewide oral health needs assessment, evaluating gaps in access to oral health care and services across diverse populations and ages, and make recommendations to strengthen and expand the Commonwealth's oral health infrastructure and workforce, as well as identify effective, evidence-based strategies to reduce oral health disparities and advance health equity
- *(Passed by the Legislature)* Directing the Health Connector to establish a two-year pilot program to extend ConnectorCare eligibility to residents with incomes between 300% and 500% FPL
- *(Passed by the Legislature)* Establishing a comprehensive system of stroke response and care to ensure patients receive the appropriate urgent care quickly
- *(Signed into Law)* Directing EOHHS to establish and implement an Incumbent Health Care Worker CNA Certification Pilot Program

MassSenate

Economic Development

Signed into Law

Legalizing sports betting. This legislation authorizes the Massachusetts Gaming Commission to grant in-person licenses at gaming establishments, including casinos, racetracks and simulcast facilities, as well as mobile licenses through mobile applications or digital platforms. This legislation will generate an estimated \$60 million in annual tax revenue for Massachusetts, in addition to collecting up to \$70 to \$80 million in initial licensing fees, which must be renewed every five years. The revenue collected will be distributed to municipalities, and for economic, workforce, education, and public health priorities.

An Act regulating sports wagering ([H.5164](#))
was signed into law on **August 10, 2022**, as **Chapter 173 of the Acts of 2022**.

Promoting economic growth and giving residents relief. This \$3.76 billion relief package promotes economic development in the Commonwealth and gives relief to residents facing the continued effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and economic turbulence. The legislation provides targeted clean energy assistance, supports the Commonwealth's ongoing transportation needs, and invests in the state's small businesses, caregivers, health care system, affordable housing, and efforts to fight climate change. In addition to \$3.76 billion in direct investments, this compromise legislation ensures that the Commonwealth responsibly pays for the historic \$3 billion one-time tax relief that will be returned to an estimated three million taxpayers over the coming weeks. Combined, this \$6.76 billion in tax relief and direct investments will provide much-needed breathing room for families, small businesses and individuals feeling the pinch of inflation. Notably, the bill closes the books on Fiscal Year 2022 and dedicates \$500 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), leaving a balance of \$1.74 billion in federal resources for future use.

An Act relating to economic growth and relief for the commonwealth ([H.5374](#))
was signed into law on **November 10, 2022**, as **Chapter 268 of the Acts of 2022**.

Budget Appropriations & Additional Policy Related to Economic Development

Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Highlights

- \$17 million for the Workforce Competitiveness Trust fund
- \$15.4 million for Career Technical Institutes
- \$15 million for the Community Empowerment and Reinvestment Grant Program
- \$13 million for a trust fund dedicated to job training for the offshore wind industry, to be administered by the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (CEC) to establish and grow technical training programs in public higher education and vocational-technical institutions, prioritizing grants and scholarships to adult learning providers, labor organizations, and public educational institutions
- \$9.5 million for one-stop career centers
- \$6 million for Regional Economic Development Organizations (REDOs) to support economic growth in all regions of the state

- \$2.5 million for the Massachusetts Cybersecurity Innovation Fund, including \$1.5 million for new regional security operation centers, which will partner with community colleges and state universities to provide cybersecurity workforce training to students and cybersecurity services to municipalities, non-profits, and small businesses

July 2021 Supplemental Budget Highlights

\$1 million for the Supplier Diversity Office

October 2021 Supplemental Budget Highlights

\$251.5 million for collective bargaining and labor-related costs

December 2021 ARPA Bill Highlights

- \$500 million for premium pay bonuses for essential workers
- \$500 million for the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund, providing necessary relief to business
- \$100 million for vocational school infrastructure and capacity building needs
- \$135 million for the Massachusetts Cultural Council to support the cultural sector
- \$75 million for small businesses, including:
 - \$50 million for direct grants to historically underserved populations and minority-owned, women-owned, and veteran-owned small businesses
 - \$25 million for nascent businesses
- \$25 million for the expansion of Career Technical Institutes
- \$24.5 million for workforce development and capital assistance grants to the Massachusetts Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs and the Alliance of Massachusetts YMCAs, as well \$4.5 million for the YWCAs
- \$20 million for the resettlement of Afghan evacuees and Haitian evacuees
- \$15 million for regional high-demand workforce training at community colleges
- \$15 million to enhance and diversify the cybersecurity sector with partnerships between public higher education institutions and private businesses
- \$14 million for agricultural economy supports
- \$10 million for regional tourism councils

February 2022 Supplemental Budget Highlights

\$25 million to replenish the State's Emergency COVID Paid Sick Leave Program

Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Highlights

- \$315 million for a Taxpayer Relief Fund to support future tax relief measures
- \$100 million to bolster job training programs, help connect unemployed and under-employed people with higher paying jobs and support career services that help students gain skills to apply for future jobs
- \$60 million for Adult Basic Education
- \$20 million for Career Technical Institutes to increase the skilled worker population's access to career technical training opportunities
- \$20 million for the Community Empowerment and Reinvestment Grant Program
- \$20 million for a loan forgiveness program within the Department of Mental Health to support their workforce
- \$17 million transfer to the Workforce Competitiveness Trust fund
- \$15 million to support teachers of color, including \$7.5 million for Tomorrow's Teachers program to provide scholarships to people committed to teaching in public schools and \$7.5 million for loan repayment for teachers of color
- \$15 million for one-stop career centers to support economic recovery
- \$10 million for loan repayment and bonuses for the homeless shelter workforce that continue to provide critical services to the most vulnerable

- \$4.8 million for the Innovation Pathways program to continue to connect students to trainings and post-secondary opportunities in the industry sector with a focus on STEM fields
- \$2.5 million for the Massachusetts Cybersecurity Innovation Fund, including \$1.5 million to continue partnerships with community colleges and state universities to provide cybersecurity workforce training to students and cybersecurity services to municipalities, non-profits, and small businesses
- \$1 million investment in Learn to Earn and \$1 million for the 1199 SEIU Training and Upgrading Fund

November 2022 Economic Development Bill Highlights

- \$153 million for small businesses grant relief, including \$45M for minority, women, and veteran owned businesses
- \$150 million for early education and care providers through the continuation of the Commonwealth Cares for our Children (C3) stabilization grant program, including \$60 million for subsidized providers
- \$112 million to support the MBTA's ongoing efforts to address the Federal Transportation Administration's staffing and safety directives
- \$100 million for the state's Unemployment Insurance Trust fund to offset estimated overpayments made during the course of the COVID-19 pandemic
- \$75 million for investments in broadband infrastructure and access across the commonwealth
- \$57 million for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), ensuring relief to families facing rising energy costs.
- \$50 million to promote the attainment of debt-free higher education for students pursuing careers in high-demand industries, such as health care, education, and cybersecurity
- \$25 million for food security infrastructure grants
- \$12 million to support the agricultural and blue economy sectors
- \$2.5 million for computer science teacher development

Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Policy Highlights

- Permanently extending the film tax credit and increasing requirements related to production expenses and principal photography days in the Commonwealth
- Extending several tax credits to those who have been particularly hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, including an optional pass-through entity excise, which is expected to generate \$90 million in new revenue while saving businesses money and federal income tax relief to taxpayers
- Creating a special commission to investigate and recommend strategies for reducing poverty and expanding opportunity for people with low incomes
- Establishing a special legislative commission to study auto body labor rates
- Moving the duties of the Wireless and Broadband Development Division to the Department of Telecommunications to facilitate access to high quality and reliable broadband
- Extending the tax credit for historic rehabilitation through 2027
- Making the cranberry bog tax credit available to taxpayers, rather than just business corporations
- Authorizing funds from the Massachusetts Cybersecurity Innovation Fund to be used for monitoring and detection of threat activity in order to investigate or mitigate cybersecurity incidents
- Repealing three obsolete and ineffective tax expenditures as recommended by the Tax Expenditure Review Commission (TERC)

December 2021 ARPA Bill Policy Highlights

Establishing a Broadband Innovation Fund to facilitate equitable broadband service adoption and improve digital literacy for residents experiencing economic hardship or housing instability

Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Policy Highlights

- Requiring the Commission on Poverty established in the fiscal year 2022 budget to analyze the potential financial disincentives resulting from the cliff effect for a family or individual receiving public assistance
- Eliminating the requirement that a nonprofit agency obtain matching grants from nongovernmental sources to receive RTC grants in FY23
- Codifying the Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment grant program and expanding opportunities at public colleges and universities for individuals with disabilities
- Permitting Community Colleges to use existing appropriations for courses taught in the evening and over the summers
- Recapitalizing and expanding the “Tomorrow’s Educators Program” to help address the critical need to grow and diversify the educator workforce by appropriating \$7.5 million to provide scholarships and student debt-relief to expand the number of licensed educators, especially educators-of-color
- *(Passed by the Legislature)* Extending the duration of hawkers and peddlers licenses from one year to five years
- *(Passed by the Legislature)* Allowing eligible employees to also use other paid leave provided under an employer policy as a Paid Family and Medical Leave wage replacement option

MassSenate

Children, Families & Persons with Disabilities

Signed into Law

Permitting adoption by close relatives. This legislation allows adoption of a younger individual by that individual's brother, sister, uncle or aunt. Massachusetts was one of only two states that did not allow adoption by close relatives. This legislation allows families to stay together, ensuring a stable home environment which is a necessary component for development as well as physical and emotional health.

An Act expanding access to adoption ([S.2616](#))
was signed into law on **April 4, 2022**, as **Chapter 44 of the Acts of 2022**.

Establishing a bill of rights for foster parents. This legislation codifies into law such rights for foster parents as the right to be provided with training, to be provided with information about the child to be placed in their home, and to be notified of meetings and court hearings for one's foster child, among other rights. Though many of these rights are already observed or are required by other laws, by recognizing these as positive rights possessed by individual foster parents, rather than mere obligations for state agencies to uphold, this bill will ensure that these standards are followed without exception in interactions between the Commonwealth and foster parents.

An Act establishing a foster parents' bill of rights ([S.2980](#))
was signed into law on **January 5, 2023**, as **Chapter 439 of the Acts of 2022**.

Passed by the Senate

Ensuring stability and oversight of care for children involved with the Department of Children and Families. This legislation updates and consolidates the reporting requirements of the Department of Children and Families (DCF). The bill tasks DCF with establishing a standard protocol to use when making decisions about a child's placement, clarifies reporting requirements in the event of a child's change in placement, and address problems which arose during the beginning stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. The bill also includes measures to increase transparency and public access to certain DCF reports.

An Act relative to accountability for vulnerable children and families ([S.2984](#))
was **passed by the Senate** on **June 30, 2022**.

Supporting special needs trusts for disabled seniors. This legislation would promote the wellbeing of senior citizens with disabilities by clarifying their right to create and access pooled trusts while also receiving MassHealth benefits.

An Act to preserve special needs trusts for disabled seniors ([H.4972](#))
was **passed by the Senate** on **July 26, 2022**.

Recognizing supported decision-making agreements to help people with disabilities to live independently. This legislation legally recognizes supported decision-making agreements, acknowledges them as a viable alternative to guardianship for some individuals, and establishes guardrails to ensure that these agreements keep an individuals' best interests at heart. In cases where there is evidence of undue influence or coercion, the law renders such decision-making agreements invalid.

An Act relative to supported decision-making agreements for certain adults with disabilities ([S.3132](#)) was passed by the Senate on November 3, 2022.

Expanding wheelchair warranty protections for people with disabilities. This legislation strengthens consumer protections for those who use wheelchairs by requiring that a written notification of a wheelchair's warranty be provided and by increasing the minimum duration for an express warranty on wheelchairs to two years. If an in-warranty wheelchair stops functioning, the bill requires that manufacturers, lessors, and dealers assess the wheelchair within three days, provide a temporary wheelchair on loan within four days, and cover collateral costs to the user.

An Act expanding wheelchair warranty protections for consumers with disabilities ([S.3136](#)) was passed by the Senate on November 3, 2022.

Ensuring a transparent and thorough review process for the deaths of small children. This legislation requires the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner to provide an additional review of all cases involving the deaths of children younger than 2 years old.

An Act to promote public safety and certainty related to child deaths ([H.5422](#)) was passed by the Senate on January 3, 2023.

Budget Appropriations & Additional Policy Related to Children, Families & Persons with Disabilities

Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Highlights

- \$30.5 million for Emergency Food Assistance to ensure that citizens in need can navigate the historic levels of food insecurity caused by COVID-19
- \$25 million for Family Resource Centers (FRCs) to grow and improve the mental health resources and programming available to families
- \$22 million for the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition Program
- \$16 million for converting the existing tax deductions for young children, elderly or disabled dependents and business-related dependent care expenses into refundable tax credits, providing an average of \$190 to over 85,000 low-income families every year
- \$7.5 million for grants to Community Foundations to support communities disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic
- \$5 million for the Secure Jobs Connect program, providing job placement resources and assistance for homeless individuals
- \$4.2 million for the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA), including \$1 million for the establishment and operation of a state center on child wellness and trauma
- \$2.5 million for Children Advocacy Centers

July 2021 Supplemental Budget Highlights

- \$191 million for early educator stabilization grants, workforce supports and technology upgrades
- \$27.9 million for one-time payments to families that receive Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) benefits, totaling \$525 to \$580 per child

October 2021 Supplemental Budget Highlights

\$20 million for Massachusetts approved special education schools to address the impacts of COVID-19

December 2021 ARPA Bill Highlights

- \$10 million to expand the number of inpatient psychiatric beds for youth in psychiatric crisis
- \$5 million to establish an online portal to facilitate the coordination of services for children, adolescents and adults who are being boarded in emergency departments who have mental and behavioral health needs
- \$1 million to the Committee for Public Counsel Services (CPCS) for the Children and Family Law program to increase staffing to meet pandemic-related demand

February 2022 Supplemental Budget Highlights

- \$5 million for increasing vaccination rates among five through eleven-year-olds
- \$25 million for the state to purchase and distribute high-quality masks in Massachusetts, with priority given to education and health care workers

April 2022 Supplemental Budget Highlights

- \$55 million to support reimbursement rates for human and social service providers doing crucial work during the COVID-19 pandemic
- \$10 million for Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled and Children (EAEDC)
- \$8.4 million for Department of Children and Families foster family rates
- \$8 million for Early Intervention (EI) staff stabilization support

Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Highlights

- \$2.44 billion for the Department of Developmental Services to support individuals with developmental disabilities and their families
- \$278.5 million for Community Day and Work Programs
- \$90.6 million for respite services
- \$42.3 million in autism supports and services
- \$33.9 million in transportation services
- \$30.6 million for Emergency Food Assistance to ensure that citizens in need can navigate the historic levels of food insecurity caused by COVID-19
- \$28.5 million for the YouthWorks jobs program to fund over 6,000 summer and year-round jobs for youth in low-wage-earning and fixed-income families
- \$20 million in Healthy Incentives Programs to maintain access to healthy food options for households in need
- \$13.9 million for the autism division
- \$7.5 million for grants to community foundations to support communities disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic
- \$3.5 million for the Massachusetts Center on Child Wellbeing & Trauma
- \$4.1 million for Children Advocacy Centers to improve the resources available to children who have been neglected or sexually abused
- \$1.8 million for supportive technology for individuals

November 2022 Economic Development Bill Highlights

\$150 million for early education and care providers through the continuation of the Commonwealth Cares for our Children (C3) stabilization grant program, including \$60 million for subsidized providers

Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Policy Highlights

- Converting the existing tax deductions for young children, elderly or dependents with disabilities and business-related dependent care expenses into refundable tax credits
- Repealing the asset limits for Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) and Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled and Children (EAEDC), and increasing TAFDC and EAEDC benefits by 20 per cent over December 2020 levels, to assist families in saving for education, job training, reliable transportation, home expenses, and other emergencies
- Creating a disability employment tax credit for employers that hire employees with disabilities

Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Policy Highlights

- Banning child marriage
- Increasing the clothing allowance to \$400 per child for eligible families to buy clothes for the upcoming school year, a record investment in the annual child's clothing allowance to help working families struggling with the economic toll associated with rising costs
- Increasing Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) and Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled and Children (EAEDC) benefit levels by 10 percent to June 2022 to ensure the economic supports necessary to provide stability to families across the state
- Codifying the Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment grant program and expanding opportunities at public colleges and universities for individuals with disabilities
- Requiring the Health Policy Council to study and report on the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on behavioral health-related boarding in emergency departments

MassSenate

Housing & Support for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness

Signed into Law

Extending housing protections instituted during the COVID-19 State of Emergency. This legislation made permanent enhanced notices to quit, which include information on tenants' rights as well as methods for seeking legal and financial assistance, that must be served to tenants prior to an eviction.

*An Act relative to extending certain state of emergency accommodations ([S.2985](#)) was signed into law on **July 16, 2022**, as **Chapter 107 of the Acts of 2022**.*

Passed by the Senate

Extending support to individuals experiencing homelessness by providing free IDs. This legislation waives fees and documentation requirements, including proof of residence, for individuals experiencing homelessness applying for state-issued identification (ID) cards. In lieu of proof of residency, the bill would allow such an ID applicant to meet requirements by presenting documentation that is from an entity providing services in the Commonwealth, such as a homeless shelter, or that shows that the applicant is receiving services provided by the Commonwealth.

*An Act to provide identification to homeless youth and families ([S.2612](#)) was **passed by the Senate** on **January 13, 2022**.*

Budget Appropriations & Additional Policy Related to Housing

Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Highlights

- \$197 million for the Emergency Assistance family shelter system
- \$151 million for the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program
- \$85 million for grants to local housing authorities
- \$26 million for the HomeBase short-term housing assistance program
- \$22 million for the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition Program, which provides eligible families with funds that they can use to keep their housing or obtain new housing
- \$12.5 million for rental subsidies through the Department of Mental Health (DMH)
- \$9.6 million for grants to reduce recidivism by providing transitional housing, workforce development and case management to individuals returning to the community from county correctional facilities and state prisons
- \$8 million for Housing Consumer Education Centers to administer nearly \$1 billion in federal housing relief
- \$8 million for housing and supportive services for unaccompanied youth
- \$7.5 million for a community empowerment and reinvestment grant program to support communities disproportionately impacted by the criminal justice system, including through programs focused on housing stabilization services
- \$5 million for the Secure Jobs Connect program for employment support, job training and job search services for homeless or previously homeless families receiving assistance

October 2021 Supplemental Budget Highlights

- \$16.8 million for shelter services for individuals experiencing homelessness
- \$5 million for permanent supportive housing units

December 2021 ARPA Bill Highlights

- \$150 million for public housing authorities to maintain and upgrade existing infrastructure
- \$150 million for supportive housing, including \$65 million for the chronically homeless population
- \$115 million for the Commonwealth Builder Program to support housing production and promote homeownership among residents of disproportionately impacted communities
- \$115 million for affordable rental housing production and preservation for the workforce and low- and moderate-income individuals
- \$65 million for homeownership assistance tools, including down payment assistance, and mortgage interest subsidy supports

April 2022 Supplemental Budget Highlights

- \$100 million for the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) program, which provides eligible families with funds that they can use to keep their housing or obtain new housing
- \$20 million to the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which provides crucial assistance to families facing high utility bills
- \$2.8 million for rates at shelters for homeless individuals

Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Highlights

- \$219.4 million for Emergency Assistance Family Shelters
- \$200 million for Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT)
- \$175 million for the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP)
- \$92 million for assistance to local housing authorities
- \$90 million for assistance for homeless individuals
- \$59.4 million for the HomeBASE diversion and rapid re-housing programs, bolstering assistance under this program to two years with a per household maximum benefit of \$20,000
- \$19.3 million for the Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP), which provides rental assistance to people with disabilities, including \$5.6 million in unspent funds carried forward from FY 2022 and \$2.5 million for grants to improve or create accessible affordable housing units
- \$5 million for sponsored-based supportive permanent housing
- \$6.4 million for the Home and Healthy for Good re-housing and supportive services program, including \$250,000 for homeless LGBTQ+ youth

(Passed by the Senate) July 2022 Economic Development Bill Highlights

- \$150 million to support the production of workforce housing
- \$150 million for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund
- \$100 million for the Commonwealth Builder Program

(Passed by the Senate) July 2022 Economic Development Bill Bonding Highlights

- \$268.8 million for housing related investments, including:
 - \$95.2 million for housing authority capital improvements
 - \$73.1 million for the Housing Stabilization and Investment Trust Fund
 - \$29.5 million for the Housing Innovations Trust Fund
 - \$11.7 million for the development of low- and moderate-income housing

November 2022 Economic Development Bill Highlights

- \$304.5 million to support and boost housing production, including:
 - \$100 million for the Commonwealth Builder Program to support the production of for-sale, below market housing to expand homeownership opportunities for first-time homebuyers and socially disadvantaged individuals in communities disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic
 - \$100 million for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund established to support the creation and preservation of affordable housing
 - \$100 million to support the production of workforce housing
- \$50 million for the Equitable Developers Financing Program to support the development of new housing in certain underserved communities
- \$25 million for regional low-threshold housing to support individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability and who struggle with substance use disorder
- \$20 million for housing options and additional support services and resources to address the needs of immigrants and refugees
- \$10 million for public housing redevelopment

April 2022 Supplemental Budget Policy Highlights

- Extending through March 2023 several protections for tenants experiencing COVID-19-related financial hardship, including the requirement that a court grant a continuance in an eviction case for nonpayment of rent when the tenant has a pending rental assistance application
- Ensuring that down payment assistance funds received from the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency or the Massachusetts Housing Partnership will not be considered taxable income

Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Policy Highlights

- Upholding the emergency-level maximum amount of rental assistance that a household can receive at \$10,000
- *(Passed by the Legislature)* Requiring the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to study and report on the execution of no-fault evictions between 2019 and 2022
- *(Passed by the Legislature)* Requiring quarry operators producing concrete aggregate for home foundations to submit a license application that includes a geological source report and testing for the presence of pyrite or pyrrhotite

(Passed by the Senate) July 2022 Economic Development Bill Policy Highlights

- Supporting families that have experienced housing insecurity by allowing certain tenants who have been evicted to seal the records of their eviction case
- Expanding the ability of homeowners to add accessory dwelling units to their property as an innovative way to address the housing crisis

MassSenate

Climate Change & Environmental Protection

Signed into Law

Creating a next generation roadmap for climate change. This nation-leading climate legislation, known as the Next Generation Climate Roadmap bill, overhauls the state’s climate laws, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, advances the clean energy industry, and prioritizes environmental justice. It sets a course towards net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 with statewide limits every five-year period. To achieve this goal, the legislation increases the requirements for offshore wind energy procurement, bringing the statewide total to 5,600 megawatts, requires emission reduction goals for MassSave, the state’s energy efficiency program and, for the first time, establishes the criteria in statute that define environmental justice populations. The legislation also increases support for clean energy workforce development programs including those targeting low-income communities and improves gas pipeline safety.

An Act creating a next-generation roadmap for Massachusetts climate policy ([S.9](#))
was signed into law on **March 26, 2021**, as **Chapter 8 of the Acts of 2021**.

Driving climate policy forward by promoting clean energy, electric vehicles and green buildings. The Drive Act increases investments in the state’s clean energy infrastructure, builds and improves upon existing incentives for homeowners, renters, and consumers to reduce their carbon footprints, and reduces emissions from the building and transportation sectors. To support the Commonwealth’s goal of reaching net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, this legislation bolsters cutting edge clean energy technologies, including offshore wind, solar, storage and networked geothermal. It also incentivizes consumer adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) by providing a \$3,500 rebate for certain EV purchasers, sets targets for electrifying the MBTA bus network and builds up the EV charging infrastructure across the state. Finally, it creates a pilot program for communities to go all-electric for new construction and removes biomass facilities from the state’s clean energy incentive programs.

An Act driving clean energy and offshore wind ([H.5060](#))
was signed into law on **August 11, 2022**, as **Chapter 179 of the Acts of 2022**.

Preserving open spaces in the Commonwealth. This legislation prevents the loss of open and public spaces covered under Article 97 of the Massachusetts constitution by codifying into law a ‘no net loss policy’ to ensure that the disposal of such land includes a public process and that equivalent replacement land is located nearby and of comparable acreage, fair market value, and natural resource value. The legislation includes a provision that allows for a cash payment in lieu of replacement land, provided that the payment amount is no less than 110 per cent of the value of the land and the money is used to purchase replacement land within three years.

An Act preserving open spaces in the Commonwealth ([S.5381](#))
was signed into law on **November 17, 2022**, as **Chapter 274 of the Acts of 2022**.

Passed by the Senate

Requiring insurance coverage of home heating oil spills. This legislation requires that all homeowner insurance policies cover a potential home heating oil spill, in line with existing policies which require homeowner insurance to cover other common potential risks, such as natural gas line explosions. Every year, over one hundred homeowners report to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) an oil spill associated with a home heating oil tank, and spills can cost anywhere from tens of thousands to millions of dollars to clean up, causing a potential financial crisis for a family. This legislation would help to prevent families from having to pay for the cleanup of home heating oil spills by themselves.

An Act relative to the remediation of home heating oil releases ([S.2830](#))
was **passed by the Senate** on **April 14, 2022**

Reducing the use of environmentally harmful pesticides. This legislation requires childcare centers, school age childcare programs and public institutions of higher education to adopt integrated pest management plans and requires these institutions to make reasonable efforts to use pesticide products that meet certain federal criteria. The bill also requires the Department of Agricultural Resources to establish an electronic pesticide use reporting system and to make data from this system publicly available.

An Act relative to pesticides ([S.3181](#))
was **passed by the Senate** on **January 3, 2023**.

Budget Appropriations & Additional Policy Related to Environmental Protection

Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Highlights

- \$50.5 million for the division of state parks and recreation
- \$33.4 million for the operation of the department of environmental protection
- \$25 million for upkeep and improvements to state parks and recreation sites
- \$13.5 million for the operation of the office of the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs
- \$13 million for a trust fund to grow technical training programs for the offshore wind industry in public higher education and vocational-technical institutions, prioritizing grants and scholarships to adult learning providers, labor organizations, and public educational institutions
- \$2.2 million for the Department of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) to coordinate and implement strategies for climate change adaptation and preparedness

December 2021 ARPA Bill Highlights

- \$100 million for water and sewer infrastructure investments through the Clean Water Trust
- \$100 million for environmental infrastructure grants, including the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program
- \$90 million for marine port infrastructure investments focused on the promotion of offshore wind development
- \$25 million for a program to support tree planting in Gateway Cities
- \$15 million for parks and recreational assets
- \$7.5 million for community colleges to help train underserved populations for green jobs
- \$6.5 million for clean energy retrofitting in affordable housing units
- \$5 million for the advancement of geothermal technologies

April 2022 Supplemental Budget Highlights

- \$1.7 million for state park investments, including water safety initiatives
- \$609,000 for additional staffing to implement the Next Generation Roadmap for Massachusetts Climate Policy legislation

Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Highlights

\$375.2 million for environmental services, which include funding increases for state parks, environmental protection, and fisheries and wildlife

November 2022 Economic Development Bill Highlights

- \$250 million to accelerate and support clean energy initiatives, including:
 - \$100 million to promote and accelerate the adoption of electric vehicles, through the MOR-EV program as well as supports for the expansion of electric vehicle charging infrastructure
 - \$100 million for ports and port infrastructure to support the clean energy economy
 - \$50 million for the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center to accelerate the transition to and expansion of renewable energy
- \$175 million for the conservation and improvement of publicly owned lands and investments in green spaces, with an emphasis on investments in environmental justice communities
- \$115 million for the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust, including:
 - \$15 million for planning and implementing water pollution abatement project in watersheds designated as nitrogen sensitive areas

Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Policy Highlights

- Establishing the Offshore Wind Energy Career Training Trust Fund to provide grants to public higher education institutions to develop and adopt training programs for careers in the offshore wind energy industry
- Establishing a shellfish advisory panel within the division of marine fisheries to advise on matters of concern relevant to shellfish fisheries

Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Policy Highlights

- Authorizing the department of public health to assess the operators of nuclear reactors that are in the process of being decommissioned for associated radiation monitoring and emergency planning costs
- *(Passed by the Legislature)* Permitting municipalities that operate load aggregation programs to purchase renewable energy credits, and requiring the Department of Public Utilities to approve any municipal load aggregation plan within 180 days
- *(Passed by the Legislature)* Permitting local boards of health to enter into agreements with homeowners to finance the homeowners replacement of a septic system that fails to properly treat for nitrogen
- *(Passed by the Legislature)* Permitting distribution companies' and municipal aggregators' energy efficiency plans to include offerings that result in customers switching to renewable energy sources including onsite energy generation paid with energy storage
- *(Passed by the Legislature)* Increasing to \$300,000 the threshold at which a state agency, local governmental body or judiciary may contract for energy conservation projects directly with electric and gas utilities

MassSenate

Transportation

Signed into Law

Funding municipal roads, bridges, green infrastructure, and transit through Chapter 90 grants. This legislation authorizes \$200 million for municipal roads and bridges through the Chapter 90 program and \$150 million to support statewide projects to address congestion, support electric vehicle infrastructure, prioritize bus infrastructure, and improve public transit.

An Act financing improvements to municipal roads and bridges ([H.3903](#)) was signed into law on **July 16, 2021**, as **Chapter 25 of the Acts of 2021**.

Authorizing Chapter 90 and additional transportation funding. This legislation allocates \$350 million for transportation needs in the Commonwealth, including \$200 million for Chapter 90 funds, which provides cities and towns with a funding source for investments in local transportation-related projects, including road and bridge repairs. An additional \$150 million is included for grant-based programs that will assist municipalities with various transportation-related projects, including repairs and improvements to bridges, streets, buses, mass transit and commuter rail stations, and non-federally aided roadways.

An Act financing improvements to municipal roads and bridges ([H.4638](#)) was signed into law on **June 17, 2022**, as **Chapter 89 of the Acts of 2022**.

Improving the Commonwealth's infrastructure system through a wide-ranging transportation bond bill. This legislation authorizes more than \$11.3 billion in bonds for a wide array of transportation infrastructure projects, including \$400 million for the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) to address ongoing safety concerns identified by the Federal Transit Administration's Safety Management Inspection and \$275 million for the East-West passenger rail project. The bill will make the Commonwealth's transportation system more modern, safe, environmentally sound, and accessible, and ensures that Massachusetts is well-positioned to compete for federal grant opportunities, particularly those dollars available from the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

An Act relative to Massachusetts's transportation resources and climate ([H.5151](#)) was signed into law on **August 10, 2022**, as **Chapter 176 of the Acts of 2022**.

Making roads safer and reducing traffic fatalities. This legislation includes several measures to improve road safety, lessen the severity of crashes, and standardize the collection and analysis of crash data. It requires that drivers leave at least four feet when passing pedestrians or cyclists, and requires that large vehicles used or contracted by, the Commonwealth to be equipped with lateral protective devices to protect vulnerable road users who are susceptible to slipping underneath large vehicles during accidents. The bill requires these large vehicles to also be equipped with convex and cross-over mirrors, as well as backup cameras, to increase a driver's ability to see around and behind their vehicle.

An Act to reduce traffic fatalities ([S.3162](#)) was signed into law on **January 2, 2023**, as **Chapter 358 of the Acts of 2022**.

Combatting the theft of catalytic converters. This legislation requires scrap metal dealers to maintain chain-of-custody records for all catalytic converters, including the name, address, and license plate number of sellers. Catalytic converters reduce vehicles' pollution and, in recent years, have become targets for theft. The law sets fines of up to \$700 for buyers who violate these requirements.

*An Act relative to the sale of old metals and vehicle catalytic converters ([S.3169](#)) was signed into law on **January 5, 2023**, as **Chapter 407 of the Acts of 2022**.*

Allowing for temporary registration plates. This legislation allows the RMV to issue temporary registration plates to out-of-state residents who purchase a vehicle in the Commonwealth and will be returning to their home state to register the vehicle.

*An Act relative to temporary registration plates ([H.5446](#)) was signed into law on **January 5, 2023**, as **Chapter 423 of the Acts of 2022**.*

Budget Appropriations & Additional Policy Related to Transportation

July 2021 Chapter 90 Legislation Highlights

- \$200 million in Chapter 90 funding for cities and towns
- \$25 million for the Municipal Small Bridge Program
- \$25 million for the Local Bottleneck Program
- \$25 million for Electric Vehicle (EV) infrastructure
- \$25 million for transit-supportive infrastructure
- \$25 million for bus prioritization and enhancement projects
- \$25 million for enhancements at Transit and Commuter Rail Stations

Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Highlights

- \$403 million for the Massachusetts Transportation Trust Fund for various transportation-related needs around the Commonwealth
- \$127 million for the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)
- \$125 million for the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority (MTA)
- \$94 million for regional transit authorities (RTAs)

April 2022 Supplemental Budget Highlights

\$100 million for a new Winter Road Recovery Assistance Program for cities and towns to repair potholes and roads and bridges worn down by adverse weather conditions

Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Highlights

- \$266.2 million for a new safety and workforce reserve to address ongoing safety concerns at the MBTA identified by the Federal Transit Administration's Safety Management Inspection
- \$187 million to fund the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)
- \$125 million for the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority (MTA)
- \$96.5 million for regional transit authorities (RTAs)

November 2022 Economic Development Bill Highlights

- \$112 million to support the MBTA's ongoing efforts to address the Federal Transportation Administration's staffing and safety directives

Transportation Bond Bill Bonding Highlights

- \$3.5 billion for discretionary federal grant projects including funds from the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act
- \$2.813 billion for federal highway systems projects
- \$1.375 billion for Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) modernization
- \$1.27 billion for non-federally aided roads and bridges
- \$175 million for the development and implementation of programs to promote, establish or expand public electric vehicle charging infrastructure, the development and implementation of incentive programs promoting e-bikes and public transportation, replacement of high-emissions vehicles, electric vehicles for hire and carsharing, electric school buses, electric short-haul freight and delivery trucks, and for other pilot projects that focus on equity and inclusion while reducing emissions
- \$145 million for multi-modal transportation planning and programming
- \$114.1 million for the Airport Improvement Program
- \$85 million for pavement and surface conditions on non-federally aided roadways
- \$82 million for rail improvements
- \$64.9 million for projects of regional transit networks and facilities
- \$25.5 million for the Mobility Assistance Program
- \$25 million for pavement and surface conditions on municipal roadways
- \$25 million for grants to Transportation Management Associations
- \$20 million for grants to municipalities under the Complete Streets Funding Program
- \$10 million for a public realm improvement program

Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Policy Highlights

- Allowing for Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds to be used to acquire land for recreational rail trails
- Prohibiting the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) from collecting any charge or fee for parking on land under DCR's jurisdictional care without prior approval from local authorities
- Establishing a task force to study the non-emergency human service transportation system
- Creating a special commission to study auto body labor rates

Transportation Bond Bill Policy Highlights

- Establishing new planning and reporting requirements for the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA), including:
 - Mandating the MBTA establish and maintain a three-year safety improvement plan with measurable safety objectives for the agency, and it directs the MBTA to contract with an independent third-party auditor to conduct annual safety audits
 - *(Passed by the Legislature)* Requiring the MBTA is required to develop and implement short-term, medium-term, and long-term plans for how each line of the commuter rail system can be fully integrated into the Commonwealth's transportation system and contribute to the productivity, equity, and decarbonization efforts of the MBTA as a whole
 - *(Passed by the Legislature)* Directing the MBTA to submit a monthly, publicly available report containing all the incidents, accidents, casualties, and hazards affecting any of its modes of transit
- Creating a commission to investigate and receive public testimony concerning public entities with the ability to design, permit, construct, operate and maintain passenger rail service that meets the standards of at least one of the final alternatives set forth in the East-West Passenger Rail Study Final Report
- Regulating the use of e-bikes to encourage their adoption and authorizes municipalities and the state to adopt ordinances or regulations concerning the use of such e-bikes on bike paths and bikeways
- Requiring transportation network companies to submit data related to pre-arranged rides for the purposes of congestion management

- Requiring the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), in consultation with the comptroller, to create a website to report on expenditures from this act and any project receiving federal funding from the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act
- Requiring MassDOT, in consultation with the Executive Office Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA), to study the feasibility of wildlife crossing projects for the purpose of establishing and maintaining these projects
- Authorizing the MassDOT to create positions and hire staff for the purpose of conducting research and policy analysis for the MBTA board of directors
- *(Passed by the Legislature)* Creating a special commission on mobility pricing to investigate, study and make recommendations on the development and deployment of comprehensive and regionally equitable public transportation pricing, roadway pricing and congestion pricing

Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Policy Highlights

- Prohibiting the Massachusetts Port Authority from imposing and collecting fines for parking violations that exceed fines set by the city
- *(Passed by the Legislature)* Expanding the MBTA Board to include 1 person appointed by the mayor of Boston and 1 municipal official representing a municipality in the service area

July 2021 Supplemental Budget Policy Highlights

Establishing a new seven-member Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Board of Directors to take the place of the Fiscal Management and Control Board

MassSenate

Public Safety

Signed into Law

Modernizing the Judiciary and closing gun-control loopholes. This legislation would modernize aspects of the Massachusetts court system, including by closing loopholes around the Commonwealth’s gun laws. The bill supports Massachusetts courts’ increased use of technology in courtroom proceedings by investing in information technology for the judiciary branch and allowing certain administrative proceedings to be done electronically. Following renewed national scrutiny of state gun control laws in the wake of mass shootings and the Supreme Court’s decision to strike down gun control legislation in the state of New York, this bill also takes steps to strengthen Massachusetts’ gun control laws.

An Act to improve and modernize the information technology systems and capacities of the judiciary ([H.5163](#)) was signed into law on **August 10, 2022**, as **Chapter 175 of the Acts of 2022**.

Requiring work on fire safety systems to be done by trained professionals. This legislation requires that the installation, maintenance, and other professional work done on pipes, sprinklers, or refrigeration systems used in fire safety to be done by licensed professionals with appropriate training to ensure these systems’ effectiveness in keeping residents safe from fires.

An Act relative to fire safety ([H.2517](#)) was signed into law on **January 2, 2023**, as **Chapter 357 of the Acts of 2022**.

Passed by the Senate

Addressing school shootings and student mental health through the SAVE Students Act. Complementing the Legislature’s ongoing efforts on comprehensive gun safety and behavioral health reforms, this legislation strengthens school safety and protects students from being harmed. To address the issues of school violence and teen suicide, the bill expands violence prevention and suicide awareness programming in schools, creates an anonymous reporting system for tips related to student safety concerns, and tasks the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) with developing a model threat assessment policy for responding to dangerous activity.

An Act relative to safety and violence education for students (the SAVE Students Act) ([S.3082](#)) was **passed by the Senate** on **July 29, 2022**.

Combatting revenge porn. This legislation would make it a misdemeanor to knowingly distribute images depicting another person who is partially or fully nude or engaged in sexual conduct without their consent. The legislation would establish a penalty for so-called ‘revenge porn’ of up to two and a half years in prison and a fine of \$10,000. The bill clarifies that a person’s consent to the creation of visual material does not constitute consent to the distribution of that material. This bill also tasks the Office of the Child Advocate and other state agencies with creating an educational diversion program to provide adolescents with information about the legal consequences of illegally sharing sexually explicit material and the consequences of sexting.

An Act relative to transmitting indecent visual depictions by teens and the unlaw [sic] distribution of explicit images ([S.3167](#)) was passed by the Senate on January 3, 2023.

Budget Appropriations & Additional Policy Related to Public Safety

Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Highlights

- \$197 million for the Emergency Assistance family shelter system
- \$56.1 million for domestic violence prevention services

December 2021 ARPA Bill Highlights

- \$100 million to improve indoor air quality in schools and support healthy learning environments for public school districts with high concentrations of low-income students, English language learners, and communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19
- \$100 million for water and sewer infrastructure investments through the Clean Water Trust
- \$25 million for youth-at-risk supports and grant programs for community violence prevention and re-entry organizations, focused on communities disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic

Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Highlights

- \$219.4 million for Emergency Assistance Family Shelters
- \$75.3 million for sexual assault and domestic violence prevention services

November 2022 Economic Development Bill Highlights

- \$115 million for the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust, including:
 - \$15 million for pollution abatement projects in nitrogen sensitive areas
- \$20 million to bridge impending federal cuts to Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) programs and maintain critical victim service programs
- \$20 million to reduce gun violence and related trauma throughout the Commonwealth, including:
 - \$3 million for a grant program to support school safety infrastructure improvements
 - \$2 million to provide behavioral health-related supports and resources in schools to reduce instances of gun violence

MassSenate

Election Safety, Integrity & Access

Signed into Law

Extending early voting by mail and allowing municipalities flexibility around municipal caucuses and elections. This legislation extends voting-by-mail provisions through the end of June 2021 and allows municipalities to temporarily cancel or postpone municipal caucuses and postpone municipal elections.

An Act further providing for early voting by mail ([H.73](#))
was signed into law on **March 16, 2021**, as **Chapter 5 of the Acts of 2021**.

Extending early voting by mail, early in-person voting and absentee voting. This legislation extends early voting-by-mail provisions and early in-person voting for state and local elections through December 15, 2021. Additionally, this legislation recognizes COVID-19 precautions as a valid reason for absentee voting in state and local elections through December 15, 2021.

An Act making appropriations for fiscal year 2021 to provide for supplementing certain existing appropriations and for certain other activities and projects ([H.3973](#))
was signed into law on **July 21, 2021**, as **Chapter 29 of the Acts of 2021**.

Establishing districts in the Massachusetts House of Representatives until 2030. This legislation divides the Commonwealth into 160 representative districts, based on data from the 2020 census, that will be in effect until the next redistricting cycle following the decennial census in 2030.

An Act relative to establishing representative districts in the General Court ([H.4217](#))
was signed into law on **November 4, 2021**, as **Chapter 83 of the Acts of 2021**.

Establishing districts in the Massachusetts Senate until 2030. This legislation divides the Commonwealth into 40 senatorial districts, based on data from the 2020 census, that will be in effect until the next redistricting cycle following the decennial census in 2030. This bill, and the redistricting map it describes, doubles the number of majority-minority Senate districts from three to six. The Special Joint Committee on Redistricting sought broad public input, holding 19 public hearings, including in nine different languages. The Committee also held numerous meetings with advocates and legislators and maintained a website with case law, statistics, and ultimately, draft and final maps.

An Act establishing senatorial districts ([S.2563](#))
was signed into law on **November 5, 2021**, as **Chapter 82 of the Acts of 2021**.

Establishing Congressional districts in the United States House of Representatives until 2030. This legislation divides the Commonwealth into nine Congressional districts, based on data from the 2020 census, that will be in effect until the next redistricting cycle following the decennial census in 2030.

An Act establishing Congressional districts ([H.4256](#))
was signed into law on **November 22, 2021**, as **Chapter 93 of the Acts of 2021**.

Establishing councillor districts for the Governor’s Council in Massachusetts until 2030. This legislation divides the Commonwealth into eight councillor districts, based on data from the 2020 census, that will be in effect until the next redistricting cycle following the decennial census in 2030.

An Act establishing councillor districts ([H.4257](#))
was signed into law on **November 22, 2021**, as **Chapter 93 of the Acts of 2021**.

Fostering voting opportunities, trust, equity and security through the VOTES Act. This comprehensive voting reform bill permanently codifies into law the popular mail-in and early voting options used in the 2020 election in Massachusetts. The bill also increases ballot access for service members serving overseas, people with disabilities and incarcerated individuals who are legally allowed to vote, and takes steps to modernize the Commonwealth’s election administration process. At a time when democracy is under attack across the United States and across the globe, the VOTES Act implements vital measures to protect and expand voting rights here in Massachusetts.

An Act fostering voter opportunities, trust, equity and security ([S.2924](#))
was signed into law on **June 22, 2022**, as **Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2022**.

Passed by the Senate

Supporting parents running for public office. This legislation that would support parents running for public office by recognizing childcare as a valid campaign expense. The bill tasks the Director of the Office of Campaign and Political Finance with the creation of regulation to oversee the implementation of this change.

An Act supporting parents running for public office ([S.3152](#))
was **passed by the Senate** on **December 15, 2022**.

Budget Appropriations & Additional Policy Related to Election Safety and Integrity

Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Highlights

\$7.5 million for the operation of the Elections Division within the office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth

April 2022 Supplemental Budget Highlights

\$5 million for state election costs

Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Highlights

\$26.7 million for the operation of the Elections Division within the office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth

July 2021 Supplemental Budget Policy Highlights

- Allowing the popular practice of voting early by mail to continue through December 15, 2021, giving eligible voters the ability to exercise their right to cast a ballot while protecting their health and safety
- Allowing cities and towns the ability to offer early in-person voting for such elections.

MassSenate

Animal Welfare

Signed into Law

Creating a more secure egg supply chain and raising Massachusetts' farm animal welfare standards to align with other states. The legislation upgrades Massachusetts' egg production law—which resulted from the 2016 ballot question, *An Act to prevent cruelty to farm animals* (Question 3)—to create predictability and certainty by mirroring the even stronger national United Egg Producers cage-free guidelines, which have been adopted by leading retailers, producers, and other states.

An Act further regulating hen welfare and establishing uniform cage-free standards ([S.2603](#)) was signed into law on **December 22, 2021**, as **Chapter 108 of the Acts of 2021**.

Allowing humane transportation of K9 partners through Nero's law. This legislation authorizes emergency medical service personnel to provide emergency treatment and transport of law enforcement officers' K9 partners injured in the line of duty, so long as there are no humans needing transport or ambulance services. This includes basic first aid, CPR, and administering life-saving interventions such as naloxone.

An Act allowing humane transportation of K9 partners aka Nero's law ([S.2573](#)) was signed into law on **February 15, 2022**, as **Chapter 23 of the Acts of 2022**.

Discouraging the illegal hunting and sale of game animals. This legislation aligns Massachusetts poaching regulations with other states, to better protect fish, birds, mammals, and endangered or threatened species. This bill also brings Massachusetts into the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact, which helps states to work together to prevent illegal hunting across state lines.

An Act further regulating the enforcement of illegal hunting practices ([S.2993](#)) was signed into law on **August 4, 2022**, as **Chapter 145 of the Acts of 2022**.

Protecting research animals through the Beagle Freedom Bill. This legislation facilitates a relationship between animal research laboratories and registered non-profit animal rescue organizations and requires that when these animals are no longer needed, the research facilities make every effort to place animals up for public adoption, rather than automatically euthanizing them.

An Act protecting research animals ([H.901](#)) was signed into law on **August 4, 2022**, as **Chapter 149 of the Acts of 2022**.

Recognizing Massachusetts Right Whale Day. This legislation raises awareness of the critically endangered status of Massachusetts' official state marine animal, the North Atlantic Right Whale, by designating April 24 as Massachusetts Right Whale Day.

An Act establishing Massachusetts Right Whale Day ([H.3869](#)) was signed into law on **January 4, 2023**, as **Chapter 381 of the Acts of 2022**.

Passed by the Senate

Ensuring the safety of puppies and kittens during breeding, sale, and boarding. This legislation prohibits the sale of puppies and kittens under eight weeks of age and ends the sale of animals on roadsides, parking lots, flea markets, or in other public spaces. To promote continued wellbeing of puppies and kittens in group settings, this legislation tasks the Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) with creating Massachusetts' first state-wide oversight regulations and licensure requirements of breeders, doggie daycare, and boarding facilities.

An Act protecting the health and safety of puppies and kittens in cities and towns ([S.2994](#))
was **passed by the Senate** on **July 11, 2022**