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|  | **Office of**  **Representative Carole Fiola**  Commonwealth of Massachusetts |

***Press Release***

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State House, Room 236

December 7, 2020

**Legislature Passes Balanced Budget with Targeted Investments in**

**Housing, Economic Development and Food Security**

*Prioritizes relief to vulnerable populations, provisions to*

*boost economic recovery and support for students*

[Fiscal Year 2021 Budget – Conference Committee Report](https://webmail.malegislature.gov/OWA/redir.aspx?C=1Dn3eJo5oD8M-whHTgSJrS3NCyXPykxUE7LstlTdM5QUThw-jpvYCA..&URL=https%3a%2f%2fmalegislature.gov%2fBills%2f191%2fHouse%2fH5164)

BOSTON **[December 7, 2020]** – **State Representative Carole Fiola**and her colleagues in the Massachusetts Legislature passed its Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) budget, which invests in programs and services across the Commonwealth. Funded at $46.2 billion, the budget aims to address the sweeping effects of the global pandemic by making targeted investments in housing, food security, and substance use addiction services, as well as domestic violence, sexual assault treatment and prevention programs. The budget also invests in programs that provide COVID-related supports for students and increases funding for developmental services, early education and childcare, and public health.

“During this historic time, the Legislature acted to produce a budget that protects vulnerable individuals, businesses and communities affected by COVID-19 by making large investments in food security, economic development and housing,” said **House Speaker Robert A. DeLeo (D-Winthrop)**. “I am proud of the work the House has done to continue its support of investments in developmental services, safeguarding women’s reproductive rights and furthering high-quality early education and care. I thank Chair Michlewitz for his thoughtful work, and my colleagues in the House who played a critical role in this process including Vice Chair Garlick and Representative Malia. I also am thankful for the partnership of Senate President Spilka and the work of our colleagues in the Senate.”

“Many said that this was a time to be more conservative in our budgeting, but if anything, it was a time for the Commonwealth to be a true Commonwealth and take care of its people,” said **Senate President Karen E. Spilka (D-Ashland)**. “I am proud of the budget we passed today, which helps us build an equitable recovery by investing in key areas to assist our most vulnerable residents impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. I am also thrilled that Massachusetts will be taking vital steps to protect reproductive rights and address systemic racism by reinvesting in our communities. This budget was crafted under difficult circumstances, which is why I’d like to extend my gratitude for the hard work done by Senators Rodrigues, Friedman, Lewis, Tarr and O’Connor, as well as House Speaker Robert DeLeo, Chair Michlewitz and their colleagues.”

Representative Fiola echoed her support for the budget and advocated for $50,000 to be expended to the Fall River Police Department in order to support services for communities at risk. Representative Fiola stated "I was proud to work with my colleagues throughout this difficult year to come out with a budget that continues to show that education, health, support for our most vulnerable populations, housing stability and public safety are priorities for our Commonwealth".

The budget also included $250,000 for Battleship Cove and the USS Massachusetts Memorial Committee, $50,000 for the Veterans Educational Service Center at Bristol Community College, $25,000 for The Samaritans of Fall River/New Bedford, $50,000 shall be expended for the Children's Advocacy Center of Bristol County, Inc. and funding for the Boys and Girls Clubs.

“This budget is the product of tireless work over the past few months that focuses on the challenges our constituents face in the midst of this difficult time, while avoiding any drastic cuts, something that was unthinkable back in the Spring,” said **Representative Aaron Michlewitz, Chair of the House Committee on Ways & Means (D-Boston)**. “In times of need, people rely on the services that government provides. Vital areas like housing stability, food security, education funding, and combating the growing concerns surrounding domestic violence and substance addiction, are all areas we prioritize in this budget.”

“The budget agreement passed today maintains fiscal responsibility, invests in core essential programs and services for our most vulnerable populations and targets critical funding to sectors that have been greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic,” said **Senator Michael J. Rodrigues (D-Westport), Chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means**. “Thank you to Senate President Spilka for her steady leadership and compassion, Senators Friedman and O’Connor for their assistance on the Conference Committee, Chairman Michlewitz and the House conferees for their partnership, and to all of my colleagues for their invaluable input throughout this budget process. Through their advocacy and collaboration, we have passed a responsible budget plan that provides stability during this unsteady time, while critically investing in shared priorities like K-12 education, childcare and early education, mental health care, housing, public health, small business supports and much more. I look forward to the Governor signing this budget.”

“I join with my colleagues in passing a state budget that stabilizes our communities and sustains valuable services for Massachusetts to be strong now and resilient in the future,” said **Representative Denise Garlick, Vice Chair of the House Committee on Ways & Means (D-Needham)**. “In a time that is challenging for so many, this budget holds true to the promise of education resources and local aid while protecting the hungry, the homeless, and those hurt by illness or economic hardship. We appreciate the leadership, experience and steady hand of Speaker DeLeo, and we are grateful to Chair Michlewitz for his extraordinary engagement in understanding and meeting the needs of our constituents and Commonwealth.”

"The current surge in positive COVID-19 cases in Massachusetts emphasizes that we must continue to do all we can to support our most vulnerable residents during these challenging times—and this budget helps to accomplish that by investing in much-needed behavioral health services, housing protections, reproductive health access, education and food assistance” said **Senator Cindy Friedman (D-Arlington), Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means**. “I am extremely proud that we were able to keep crucial investments in place—the $46 billion will go a long way towards ensuring an equitable economic recovery for the Commonwealth. I am incredibly thankful to Senate President Spilka, Ways and Means Chair Rodrigues, and the rest of my colleagues in the legislature for their tireless work on behalf of the Commonwealth."

“In good years, budgets are a balancing act; the causes we should fund versus the needs we can afford to meet,” said **House Ways and Means Assistant Vice Chair Liz Malia (D-Boston)**. “This pandemic budget is the result of more difficult choices than usual. I’m confident in the $46B budget my fellow legislators worked so hard to craft is a good faith effort to preserve access to services our residents desperately need right now, like housing, healthcare, food and transportation. My thanks to leadership and staff for their tireless work on this product and many others.”

“As our communities continue to struggle with both a public health and economic crisis, this budget represents an essential step forward to help our Commonwealth recover from the pandemic and rebuild a strong and equitable economy,” said **Senator Jason Lewis (D-Winchester), Assistant Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means and Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Education**. “I’m especially pleased that despite a significant decline in revenue, this budget invests substantially in early education and childcare — recognizing how critical this sector is for children, working families, and the state’s economic recovery — and also seeks to protect important public transit services that are currently at risk.”

“During this pandemic, it is more important than ever that we all work cooperatively to address the needs of the Commonwealth’s residents,” said **House Minority Leader Bradley H. Jones, Jr. (R-North Reading)**. “This budget includes many important initiatives designed to help working families, small businesses, and our cities and towns continue to navigate through the ongoing challenges created by COVID-19.”

"This is a critically important budget because it needs to chart a course through the turbulence, disruption and uncertainty created by the COVID-19 pandemic to provide the resources needed to protect public health, and support needs such as nutrition, education and housing, while not increasing tax burdens on household budgets struggling under the weight of economic harm brought by the pandemic," said **Senate Minority Leader Bruce Tarr (R-Gloucester)**.

“The conference committee worked in a bipartisan effort to produce a budget that delivers to our cities and towns,” said **Representative Todd Smola (R-Warren)**. "Despite the challenges of Covid-19, we continue to build upon important programs in our commonwealth and invest in our communities. I believe that we have produced a solid budget.”

“This was the most challenging and unique budget process in decades, but despite the obstacles we now have a budget in place that invests in our people and our communities,” said **Senator Patrick O’Connor (R-Weymouth).**“We’re investing in our shared priorities – social, health, and housing programs for those who need a helping hand, best-in-the-nation services for our veterans and seniors, increased assistance for our small businesses, and a record investment in public education. It is critical that we continue to lead, whether in good times or in bad, and I believe we have done that through the passage of this budget.”

The Legislature continues to further its commitment to cities and towns by investing $1.1 billion Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA). Continuing the Legislature’s support of targeted investments in education, this budget provides $5.283 billion in Chapter 70 **education funding**, an increase of $107.6 million over Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20). The education budget allocations include:

·       $53 million in COVID-related student supports;

·       $345.2 million for Circuit Breaker Special Education reimbursement;

·       $117 million for Charter School Reimbursement; and

·       $82 million for Regional School Transportation reimbursement.

Due to the pandemic, access to safe and affordable housing for many families across the Commonwealth has taken on new urgency. The budget represents the Legislature’s ongoing commitment to **housing and homelessness funding**. This year, the budget makes targeted investments into rental and housing assistance to support families, tenants and property owners during this time of crisis:

·       $180 million for Emergency Assistance Family Shelters;

·       $135 million for the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP);

·       $50 million for Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT), as well as emergency changes to the RAFT program to increase the maximum amount of rental assistance that a household can receive from $4,000 to $10,000 and allow eligible households facing a housing crisis to access both RAFT and HomeBASE;

·       $80 million for public housing subsidies;

·       $56 million for homeless individual shelters;

·       $13 million for homeless student transportation;

·       $12.5 million for the Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP), which provides rental assistance to people with disabilities;

·       $11 million for Department of Mental Health Rental Subsidy Program; and

·       $8 million for unaccompanied homeless youth.

In addition, the budget includes protections to ensure tenants facing eviction better understand their rights and have the opportunity to slow any court process down if they are seeking financial assistance with their rent payments.  To help oversee the state’s tenancy preservation efforts, the budget requires additional data and reporting and creates a task force made up of legislators, the administration, and court officials.

Keeping in mind the widespread economic effects of the COVID pandemic, this budget makes specific investments in **labor and economic development** programs that provide opportunities for the Commonwealth’s workers and its businesses.  The budget maintains its support for the Massachusetts Manufacturing Partnership with an investment of $2 million—funding which has helped many Massachusetts manufactures retrofit their businesses into the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) market. Other investments include:

* $94 million for Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs);

·       $46.4 million in new economic development funding including;

o   $17.5 million for local Paycheck Protection Program (PPP)

o   $17.5 million for community development financial institutions

o   $7.5 million for matching grants for capital investments by small businesses

o   $3.85 million for small business technical assistance grants

·       $ 46 million for Adult Basic Education Services;

·       $20 million for summer jobs for at-risk youth;

* $15 million for a Community Empowerment and Reinvestment grant program to provide economic supports to communities disproportionately impacted by the criminal justice system;

·       $10 million Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund;

* $6 million for Regional Economic Development Organizations to support economic growth in all regions of the state;
* $5 million for Community Foundations to provide emergency economic relief to historically underserved populations;

·       $2.5 million in Urban Agenda Grants; and

·       $1.4 million for small business development.

The budget builds on the Legislature’s commitment to ensuring all children have access to **high-quality early education and care** (EEC) during this pandemic. The budget provides $25 million for a new Early Education and Care Workforce and COVID-19 Supports Reserve to provide classroom stabilization grants, incentive pay for providers, and support for increased operational costs due to COVID-19. In addition, the budget invests in those who work with children by increasing rates for early education providers by $20 million and provides $40 million for a new reserve to cover parent fees for families receiving subsidized childcare for the remainder of FY21. The budget also includes the following EEC investments and initiatives:

·       $15 million for Head Start grants;

·       $10 million for EEC Workforce Higher Education Opportunities;

·       $2.5 million in early childhood mental health grants;

·       $11 million for child care resource and referral agencies; and

·       Establishes the Early Education and care Economic review commission to review childcare funding and make recommendations on policy changes to expand access.

The budget continues to dedication substantial resources toward supporting **public higher education** and increases scholarship funding for students. These investments include:

·       $286 million for state universities;

·       $307.7 million for community colleges;

·       $560 million for the University of Massachusetts system;

·       $120 million in scholarship funding; and

·       $4.8 million for the STEM Starter Academy, to support underrepresented students in STEM fields at community colleges; and

·       $2 million to ensure high school students with intellectual disabilities have continued access to higher education opportunities during this time of need.

Funded at $19 billion this fiscal year, MassHealth is the largest investment the Commonwealth makes in its most vulnerable residents, including children, seniors, low-income residents and those experiencing homelessness. In response to the threats to reproductive rights for women on the national level, the Legislature also voted to remove barriers to women’s reproductive health options and protect the concepts enshrined in **Roe v. Wade**. The budget also invests in critical **health and human services** agencies and providers including:

* $501.1 million for Adult Support Services;

·       $307 million for the Department of Children and Families for social workers, family support and stabilization, and foster care and adopted fee waivers;

* $94.8 million for children’s mental health services;
* $36.4 million for early intervention services;
* $30.4 million in emergency food assistance;
* $25.8 million for funding to support expanded access to mental health services, including $10M for the Behavioral Health, Outreach, Access and Support Trust Fund and $10M for a new inpatient mental health acute care beds grant program to expand access to critical mental health services; and
* $17.5 million for Family Resource Centers to meet increased demand for services.

In addition to these health care investments, the conference report includes provisions that prohibit insurers from denying coverage for mental health services and primary care services solely because they were delivered on the same day in the same facility.

Highlighting the urgent need to **strengthen public health infrastructure** at the local, state and regional level to combat the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the budget includes targeted investments aimed at redoubling our efforts and pushing forward with a proactive public health response to defeat this horrible virus. The budget includes:

* $10 million for grants to support local boards of health to combat COVID-19;
* $1.7 million for the State Action for Public Health Excellence (SAPHE) program to support a more effective local and regional public health delivery system; and
* $1 million for a COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Plan program, focused on equitable vaccine distribution.

Keeping in mind those affected by **domestic violence**, the budget establishes a grant program to provide domestic violence advocate services across the state to connect survivors with essential services.

In order to support programs for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, the budget increases funding for **developmental services** to $2.1 billion and includes $239 million for community day and work programs across the Commonwealth. The budget also includes the following investments:

·       $237 million for state-operated residential services

·       $78 million for family respite services; and

·       $38.5million for autism omnibus services.

The budget furthers the Legislature’s ongoing commitment to fight the **opioid epidemic**. To provide assistance to those who are battling substance addiction, the budget increased funding for the Bureau of Substance Addiction Services to $169 million while offering continued support for step-down recovery services, jail diversion programs, and expansion of access to life-saving medication.

**Food insecurity** has become one of the most prevalent consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, affecting children, adults and seniors alike. To that end, the conference report prioritizes access to food resources across the Commonwealth. Food insecurity investments include:

* $30 million for the Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program;
* $13 million in Healthy Incentives Programs to ensure vulnerable households have continued access to food options during the pandemic; and
* $1.2 million for Project Bread to support the Child Nutrition Outreach Program and the Food Source Hotline.

The budget includes funding for **the judiciary and ongoing criminal justice reform**, including a $762.9 million investment in the trail court and to support for criminal justice reform implementation. The budget also includes $29 million for civil legal aid to provide representation for low-income individuals via the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation and invests in community-based re-entry programs and a pre and post-release services grant program.

The budget calls for $312.6 million in spending for **environmental programs**, which aim protect the Commonwealth’s natural resources. These investments include:

·       $70.4 million for the Department of Environmental Protection, including additional funding for a PFAS-specific team to remediate water contamination in the Commonwealth;

·       $51.5 million for state parks and recreation;

·       $40.1 million for the Department of Agricultural Resources, including $1.4M for mosquito spraying to mitigate the risk of the Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) virus;

·       $16.1 million for fisheries and wildlife protection;

·       $8.5 million for agricultural resources;

·       $2.6 million for ecological restoration; and

·       $500,000 for the Commonwealth’s endangered species program.

Having been passed by the House and Senate, the legislation now goes to Governor Baker for his signature.

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