

# legislative bulletin

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To: School Committee Chairs and Superintendents

From: Stephen J. Finnegan, Esq.

Date: April 12, 2007

**Subject: THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS BUDGET, H.4000**

## **Chapter 70 Aid Increased by \$20 Million Over the Governor's Recommendation**

H.4000 increased Chapter 70 by \$20 million over the level of aid recommended in the Governor's Budget, and brings the total increase from F.Y. 2007 to \$220 million. The House Ways and Means Budget calculated the F.Y. 2008 Chapter 70 aid on the changes to the formula as contained in the current year budget, by simplifying the number of foundation categories, uncapping inflation aid, and making additional increases to English language learners and the low income student allotments. H.4000 provides enough foundation aid to keep every district at foundation levels of spending, and accelerated the target aid amount by giving 30% of such aid rather than the scheduled 25%. House Ways and Means also guarantees that every operating district receives at least \$50 per pupil over prior year aid.

H.4000 also provides an additional \$15 million in lottery aid, and level funds the additional assistance account. House Ways and Means also added \$3 million to Pilot payments that ease the burden placed on municipalities with large tracts of state owned land.

The House of Representatives has adopted a rule which prohibits the consideration of any amendments to the local aid distribution section of H.4000. You can access your district's local aid distribution from the MASC website.

Many areas of the proposed state budget represent decreased levels of spending from the prior year; however, the K-12 education accounts contain some significant increases in addition to Chapter 70.

## **Taxes Not Part of H.4000**

H.4000 does not contain the various taxes proposed by the Governor to address property tax relief. Separate legislation has had hearings by various committees of the Legislature to close certain corporate tax loopholes, to allow municipalities the local option of increasing the meals tax, and to allow municipalities and regional school districts to participate in the State Group Insurance Commission for the purpose of purchasing health insurance. MASC will keep you informed of the progress of the Governor's Municipal Partnership Act.

## **Funding for the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (E.Q.A.) Restored by House Ways and Means; Pothole Account Not Funded**

The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability was not funded in the budget submitted by the Governor; however, H.4000 recommends funding the EQA at \$2.97 million. The proposed level of funding is approximately \$500,000 less than EQA received in F.Y. 2007. Over several years EQA has been viewed with caution by many school districts and educational groups, including MASC.

Neither the Governor nor the House Ways and Means included a Pothole account, so called, which allows school districts to receive additional funding for extraordinary increases in enrollment and minimum required contributions. Many school districts need funding from this source to manage unanticipated and extraordinary increases in mandatory spending, and MASC will be working with the Legislature to restore this account to the F.Y. 08 budget. In F.Y. 2007 the Pothole account was funded at \$4.5 million.

## **Funding Increased for Special Education Circuit Breaker and School Building Authority**

The Governor's Budget proposed a \$3 million increase to the Special Education Circuit Breaker account, which would have raised the total appropriation to \$210 million. H.4000 recommends an increase of about \$11 million over the F.Y. 07 appropriation for a total of \$218.65 million authorization. This account reimburses local school districts for extraordinary special education costs.

H.4000 and the Governor's Budget proposed transferring \$77 million to the School Building Authority to begin planning for the building of new schools after the current moratorium ends.

## Regional School Transportation and Kindergarten Expansion Grants

The Governor's Budget proposed a \$12.5 million increase in funding for Kindergarten Expansion Grants; however, H.4000 increased funding over the prior year by \$4 million, which brings the total appropriation to approximately \$31 million.

Regional School Transportation has been level funded at \$55 million in both the Governor's and House Ways and Means Budgets. We will be working with the Legislature to fully fund this account.

## Other Education Aid Changes in Funding

H.4000 has added \$400,000 to the transportation reimbursement for non resident vocational transportation; which brings the total funding to \$2 million.

The Ways and Means budget provides full funding of reimbursements to districts which lose students to Charter Schools.

H.4000 adds \$3 million to schools that have been deemed underperforming, a \$3 million increase for extended learning grants, and \$500,000 for after school programs

### STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES: A SPECIAL INVITATION

The MASC Board of Directors extends a special invitation to all student representatives to their school committees to attend the Day on the Hill program as a learning experience. There is NO CHARGE for the student representative to attend, however the student must be registered as an attendee in order to receive a badge. To register, call Jennyfer Cabral at MASC (800)392-6023 or register online at [www.masc.org](http://www.masc.org).

### Upcoming MASC Events

May 1 (Tu)

#### Day on the Hill

The State House, Boston

May 4-5 (F-Sa)

#### Charting the Course

Radisson Hotel, Hyannis

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