

legislative bulletin

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To: All School Committee Members and Superintendents

From: Stephen J. Finnegan, Esq.

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Subject: Governor's Budget, House 1

Chapter 70 Significantly Increased Reimbursements and Formula Revisions

Chapter 70, general education aid, has been more than doubled in the Governor's proposed budget from a \$75 million annual increase in the past few years to \$164 million increase for fiscal year 2007. The Governor proposed a change to the Chapter 70 formula that will assist school systems with rapidly rising enrollments. School systems with declining school populations will experience reductions in Chapter 70 funding. It appears after a brief review of the local aid distribution that approximately twenty-five districts will receive less aid than the prior year. You may access your districts local aid through the MASC website. Also the proposed new formula links a city or town's required local funding contribution more closely to property values and its residents' income levels.

Note: The Pothole Account, which last year was funded at \$6.8 million, was not included in the Governor's 2007 proposed budget.

Performance Pay

The Governor has proposed performance pay bonuses and has included \$25 million in House 1 to fund the bonuses.

Section 46 of House 1 includes language concerning the evaluation of teachers. No aspect of teacher performance standards, criteria, indicators or procedures of evaluation shall be subject to collective bargaining. The results of such evaluations may be used in decisions to dismiss, demote or remove a teacher or administrator. The results of such evaluations shall be used in decisions by districts to award teachers a performance pay bonus; provided, that they receive an exemplary evaluation, which includes strong evidence of growth in student learning; provided further, that no more than 33% of teachers in each district shall qualify and that the district must match the state grant.

Differential Pay

The Governor has proposed \$10 million of funding for teacher differential pay in high schools with over 750 students for advanced placement level courses in calculus, physics, chemistry, and biology; however, vocational schools are exempt from this program. The teacher of such courses shall be

awarded by the district a premium payment of \$2500 for each advanced placement level course taught to a maximum of \$5000.

As of September 1 of 2007, a school must offer accelerated math and science courses in grade seven and higher, and as of September 1, 2009 all elementary school teachers who teach math shall have passed the elementary math tests for education licensure. Also, the Governor proposes the establishment of a commonwealth teacher corps. The main objective of the corps is to encourage individuals to become elementary math specialists and secondary teachers of math and science. Such a teacher may be awarded by the district a \$5,000 bonus annually. The Governor has recommended \$3 million to fund the commonwealth teacher corp.

Turnaround Partners for Failing Schools

The Governor has proposed that \$25 million be expended for the purpose of fixing under-performing schools. The board of education shall deem a school a Turnaround school: 1) If after September 1, 2006 for a period of three or more consecutive years, the school has failed to achieve adequate yearly progress in the aggregate in either English language arts or math or both, as defined by the No Child Left Behind Act; 2) If after January 1, 2006, the school was categorized as under-performing or chronically underperforming by the board; 3) If after January 1, 2006, the school was categorized as in corrective action or in restructuring. If for a period of two or more consecutive years the Turnaround school fails to achieve adequate yearly progress in the aggregate in English language arts or math or both, the board shall declare the school to be in reconstituted status. Upon such determination the board shall issue a request for proposals to reconstitute under third party management. The school may reopen as a reconstituted charter school or the school may reopen under a performance contract between the board and a third party.

Extended Learning Time Grants and Springfield Math/Science Academy

House 1 includes \$15 million for grants to districts for the purpose of implementing extended learning time.

The Governor has directed the Commissioner of Education

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to initiate, approve and superintend the establishment of at least one new school of excellence in math and science in cities with a population of 90,000 or more. House 1 with an appropriation of \$1.3 million establishes such a school at the Springfield Community College, and requires that \$100,000 be expended for planning grants to establish additional such schools.

Parent School Participation Program and Laptop Initiative

House 1 contains \$1 million to establish a program to increase parent participation in their children's schooling statewide and especially in the 24 school districts and five charter schools that the board has identified as having the lowest levels of student performance on the MCAS exam.

The Governor has also recommended the appropriation of \$18 million for the purchase of laptop computers for all students entering grades six and seven.

Teacher Content Training, Career and Education Planning and Applied Academics Curriculum Development

House 1 includes \$5 million of funding for teacher content training; provided, that such training shall include math specialist, the Massachusetts test for educator licensure preparation and advanced placement training.

The Governor has recommended \$250,000 for the development of career and education planning websites and informational material for students and their families; provided, that the website shall allow students as early as middle school-age to develop personalized plans for academic success to guide them to college.

House 1 recommends \$1 million for grants to fund the development of curricula for applied academic programs. The department may establish applied academic schools within regular high schools, that provide combined academic and occupational training to high school students, towards meet-

ing the needs of the state for a highly skilled and educated work force.

Regional Schools Transportation, Sped Circuit Breaker and Office of District Management and Accountability

The Governor has recommended an increase in regional school transportation of \$5 million, which brings the total appropriation to \$50 million.

Special education circuit breaker funding of \$201 million remains level funded in the Governor's recommended budget.

The Governor has recommended funding the Office of District Management and Accountability (formerly the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability) at \$25 million. This office is now subject to the control of the Department of Education.

Municipal Group Insurance Committee

Upon local acceptance a governmental unit shall establish and maintain a committee to be comprised of 7 members as follows: 4 persons to be appointed by the appropriate public authority; 2 persons to be elected by organizations of the governmental unit's employees and 1 retiree. The group insurance committee shall have the authority to require change in the design of any and all group insurance plans, including adjustments to the municipality and employee premium contribution. The decision of the committee shall not be subject to collective bargaining.

Freeze for Special Education Provider Rates

The division of purchased services shall set all such prices in fiscal year 2007 at the same level calculated for fiscal year 2006 except the prices for those programs for extraordinary relief. Programs for which prices in fiscal year 2006 were lower than the full amount permitted by the division of purchased services shall be permitted to charge in fiscal year 2007 the full price calculated for fiscal year 2006.

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