

# LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

To: All School Committee Members and Superintendents  
From: Stephen J. Finnegan Esq., MASC General Counsel  
Re: HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS  
Date: November 12, 2020

## **HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS**

I am certain that most school committees and educators will welcome the New Year. This is undoubtedly true of state and local governmental bodies responsible for establishing budgets. MASC appreciates Gov. Baker's revised Fall FY 2021 budget recommendation that reflected a total of \$45.5 billion budget for the Commonwealth.

Since July, the Commonwealth has been operating under a series of temporary budgets, which has allowed for more time to assess the impact of COVID-19's toll on our economy. The Ways and Means budget recommendation takes advantage of a number of one time revenue sources and better tax revenues.

In October, the Governor adjusted the consensus revenues that the House and Senate agreed to back in January. We are now expecting a 6.8% reduction from the FY 20 tax revenues. Back in July, in order to give municipalities some fiscal stability, the Legislature and the Baker Administration pledged to hold local aid harmless to the levels of support they received in FY20.

Also, after the passage of the Student Opportunity Act last year, the Legislature made a large investment in its first year. Obviously, the pandemic complicated these plans. Notwithstanding, the fiscal picture is aided by increasing (Chapter 70) General Aid to Education by adding \$108 million to keep up with inflation, which brings total Chapter 70 Aid to \$5.28 billion.

Other local aid accounts have also increased, such as charter school reimbursements and the special education circuit breaker. MASC appreciates the support of Speaker DeLeo and the House Ways and Means Committee. We look forward to working closely with Senate President Spilka, a former MASC member, and the Senate Ways and Means Committee when the Budget moves to the Senate.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION CIRCUIT BREAKER AND CHARTER SCHOOL REIMBURSEMENT**

The House Ways and Means budget recommendations provide \$328 million for Circuit Breaker reimbursement. The proposed budget funds regional school transportation reimbursement at \$82.2 million. Also, Charter School Reimbursement is funded at \$117 million.

MASC lobbied for relief from some COVID-19 costs and the Ways and Means Committee responded by providing a one-time supplemental \$50 million for COVID and Student Support funds. MASC, in cooperation with the Auditor's Office, lobbied for McKinney-Vento funding of \$13.5 million. This money assists schools by helping to defray the costs of funding, in part, a State Auditor's mandate determination.

The Ways and Means recommendations also includes Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA) in the amount of \$1.3 billion. The UGGA funds should help to mitigate municipal and school budgetary disagreements.