

Massachusetts Association of School Committees Key FY27 Budget Priorities

MASC is a member-driven association representing more than 2,200 school committee members. We support local leaders in their complex governance roles and advocate for the school committee perspective across all levels of government and education policy.



Protecting Public Education in the State Budget

H2 - An Act making appropriations for fiscal year 2027

sponsored by Governor Healey

Status update: Without strategic investments in public education made with the FY27 state budget, public schools across Massachusetts will remain mired in a fiscal crisis that compromises their ability to meet the needs of students. MASC has joined a group of labor unions, advocacy groups, and professional associations to form the “United for Our Future” coalition to call for several investments in the state budget. MASC is urging House Ways & Means (HWM) and Senate Ways & Means (SWM) to release budgets that build upon Gov. Healey’s investments.

Members in the United for our Future Coalition include:

- American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts
- Boston Teachers Union
- Citizens for Public Schools
- Lawyers for Civil Rights
- Massachusetts AFL-CIO
- Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools
- Massachusetts Association of School Business Officials
- Massachusetts Association of School Committees
- Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents
- Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance
- Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives
- Massachusetts School Counselors Association
- Massachusetts Teachers Association

Specific Budget Asks for HWM and SWM:

- **A fix to the inflation calculator used in establishing Chapter 70 funds**
 - The Ch. 70 formula caps inflation adjustments at 4.5%, regardless of actual inflation. During high-inflation periods, this leaves districts short of the aid needed to cover rising costs, permanently losing funding promised under the Student Opportunity Act. Allowing districts to recoup these losses in lower-inflation years would help ensure they receive the full funding they deserve over time.
- **Support for districts facing enrollment declines**
 - Districts with large immigrant populations have seen enrollment declines, leading to smaller Ch. 70 increases and potentially severe budget challenges. We urge the state to create a “pothole” account for immediate relief and ensure districts are adequately resourced and staffed in the face of federal pressures and future enrollment rebounds.
- **Minimum aid of at least \$150 per student**
 - Minimum aid is an essential source of support for districts that are not otherwise receiving increases in Ch. 70 funding, even as their costs grow significantly at the local level. We thank the state for providing a historic \$150 per-pupil amount in FY 26 and we urge the state to provide at least that amount in FY27.
- **Strengthen the Special Education Circuit Breaker**
 - Since 2021, special education costs have risen 29% (inflation-adjusted), while the share of reimbursable students grew just 4.5%, underscoring the sharp increase in service costs. The Circuit Breaker Program reimburses 75% of costs above about \$53,000 per student, but this falls short of covering district expenses. We urge increasing reimbursement to 90% and lowering the eligibility threshold.



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Protecting Public Education in the State Budget *(Continued from page 1)*

- **Greater reimbursement for transportation costs**
 - Rising costs and limited providers are driving up student transportation expenses across all districts. Although state law promises reimbursement, the state has underfunded regional districts and failed to reimburse non-regional districts for decades. We urge full (100%) funding for regional transportation this year and a four-year phase-in to fully fund non-regional reimbursements, starting at 25% in FY2027.
- **Increased reimbursement for funding lost to charter schools**
 - When students transfer to charter schools, districts must pay tuition, diverting hundreds of millions from public school budgets and creating financial strain. Strengthening the Charter School Tuition Reimbursement Program by extending it to four years (up from three) on a sliding scale when they lose student to charter schools and increasing the second-year reimbursement to 80% would better support districts and help sustain high-quality education.
- **Fully funded rural aid**
 - Our rural school districts face a host of unique challenges, from declining populations and student enrollments to constrained tax bases and not having the same economic opportunities as non-rural districts. These factors are harming rural school districts and will continue to threaten their financial stability in the coming years if left unaddressed. Several of the solutions in this document will provide assistance and we must also provide targeted relief in the form of increased rural school aid, which was cut in FY2026. We must urge the state to fund rural school aid at the \$60M level called for by the Rural Schools Commission.
- **Investments in student mental health services**
 - Massachusetts schools face a growing mental health crisis, worsened by the pandemic, that affects both learning and teaching. Districts need more resources for counselors, social workers, and student support services. We urge a dedicated FY2027 funding stream to support these critical investments.
- **A commission charged with comprehensive evaluation of school funding**
 - While providing immediate relief, we must also address long-term gaps in the state's school funding system. It has been over a decade since the required Foundation Budget Review Commission was convened, and while the FY2026 Local Contribution Study is a start, a comprehensive review is needed. This work must begin now to ensure a stronger, more sustainable funding system.
- **Fully funding the METCO Program**
 - METCO is a program funded by the state to expand educational opportunities, increase diversity, and reduce racial isolation by permitting students from Boston to attend public schools in other participating communities. We call on the legislature to fully fund the program in FY2027 at \$35M (up from Gov.'s \$30M).

Meet the Massachusetts Association of School Committees Executive Board



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