

Senate Ways & Means 2027 Proposed Budget

The Senate Ways & Means (SWM) Committee has released its **\$63.29B budget proposal**. This represents a \$2.25B (3.7%) increase over the FY26 General Appropriations Act (GAA) and is \$66.3M (0.1%) below Governor Healey's proposal. There are several key differences between the SWM budget, the House budget (finalized last week), and the Governor's proposal when it comes to public education. The summary below highlights major education-related investments, including updates from the accompanying supplemental budget that impact FY27 allocations.

MASC will continue to closely monitor budget activity and any adjustments throughout the fiscal year. We will share updates and key action items as the process moves forward. Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions

Chapter 70: The SWM budget fully funds the sixth year of Student Opportunity Act (SOA) implementation and increases minimum aid to \$160 per pupil (even with the House budget and up from the Governor's \$75 proposal). In total, Chapter 70 aid funding reaches \$7.66B; which represents a \$296.5M (4%) increase over the FY 2026 GAA and a \$54.8M increase over the Governor's proposal.

The SWM budget relies on \$1.14B in trust fund and surtax revenues to support the costs of Chapter 70 aid in FY 2027, including \$568.1 million from the SOA Implementation Fund. The SOA Implementation Fund was created in FY 2022 and over the last four fiscal years has been capitalized with surplus budget resources and surtax revenues. The Governor, House, and Senate have each proposed using the remaining resources in the fund to support education costs in FY 2027, aligning the depletion of the fund with the completion of the SOA funding schedule.

This budget continues the trend on Beacon Hill that the funding from the surtax - initially pitched as a mechanism to make investments in education and transportation above and beyond what the state already invests - is becoming an integral part of the state's operating budget.

Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA): Funds UGGA at \$1.376B, a \$53M (4%) increase over FY 2026. This increase is \$20M more than the Governor's budget and \$43 million more than the House budget.

The Senate also included new line-item language stating that the \$53M increase shall be distributed to municipalities based on each city or town's proportional share of the statewide population. This is a departure from the historic formula for UGGA, which typically provides

all municipalities with the same percent increase to their local aid amount. For example, if the total appropriation increases by three percent, each community sees a three percent increase in their UGGA allotment.

Circuit Breaker Reimbursement: Funded at \$852.7M between the SWM proposal and the supplemental bill. This funding level is intended to fully fund the state's reimbursement requirements for instructional and transportation costs. This number is nearly \$50M more than the House budget and represents a more than 25% increase YoY.

Charter School Reimbursement: SWM stayed level with the House budget and Governor's budget at \$200.4M and is expected to fully fund the state's statutory obligation to mitigate Chapter 70 losses to charter schools. SWM also included an increase to the per-pupil facilities aid component of the reimbursement formula to \$1,288 (this was also in the Governor's and House budget).

Transportation: \$150.7M total in transportation reimbursements. Of that, the funding is broken down into the following buckets:

- \$114.7M for regional school transportation reimbursements (Governor \$112.3M, House \$119.1M)
- \$1.4M for Non-Resident Vocational School Transportation. The Governor fully funded this at \$6.8M and the House did not fund this)
- \$35.2M for homeless student transportation under McKinney-Vento (up from \$28.6M last year and level with the Governor and House budget)

School Meals Reimbursement: \$180M for universal free school meals, down \$18M from the Governor's budget and House budget, and level funded with last year.

Proposed budget

continued from page 1

Rural School Aid: \$24M which represents a doubling YoY. This proposal (split between SWM budget and their supplemental) is a \$12M increase over the House proposal and a \$4M increase over the Governor's proposal. Rural school aid provides targeted funding to low-density, lower-income school districts (prioritized by student density) to support small and geographically dispersed communities, while requiring planning for regional collaboration and efficiency. The 2022 Special Commission on Rural Schools recognized a need for \$60M annually.

Early Literacy Tutoring: The Senate Supplementary budget funds Early Literacy Tutoring at \$15M. The House did not include any funding for this, while the Governor proposed \$25M. This would be the second year of a high-dosage early literacy tutoring initiative - the program supports public schools and districts in partnering with approved providers to address pandemic-related learning loss and accelerate literacy growth for students in grades K-3.

Universal Pre-K Initiative: \$28.5M for universal access to high-quality pre-K through the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (CPPI). CPPI provides competitive grants to districts and collaboratives to plan and expand access to high-quality, voluntary preschool - prioritizing communities with higher needs and supporting both program growth and implementation. The House funded this at \$5M and the Governor at \$37M (FY26 was \$20.5M). The Governor has stated her goal of delivering universal, high-quality preschool funding for four-year-olds in all Gateway Cities by the end of 2026.

Outside Sections: SWM included two education-related outside sections:

Foundation Budget Review Commission (Sections 27 & 38) – The SWM budget proposes a new Foundation Budget Review Commission to review and make recommendations on the state's K-12 school funding formula. The last FBRC was convened in FY 2015. The section defines the 29-person membership of the Commission and requires DESE to provide staff necessary for the Commission's work. Under the section, the Commission is required to hold at least four hearings around the state. The FBRC is empowered to review other education finance programs as well and is required to identify and recommend resources necessary to support recommendations that would increase costs to the state. The commission's report is due in October of 2028.

School Building Authority Commission (Section 39) – The SWM budget proposes a commission to look at the state's School Building Authority program. The 21-member commission is directed to examine school facility needs in the Commonwealth as well as the current financing model used by the SBA. The commission's recommendations are due in June of 2027.

Additional Items of Note:

SWM Net New Funding Proposals (in the Supplemental)

- Proposed \$25M for School District Regionalization and Shared Services Grant Program
- Proposed a \$1M Cell Phone-Free Public Schools Grant Program

SWM Increased Funding over either House or Governor's Budget

- Funded High Dosage Tutoring at \$25M (Governor funded at \$25M; House did not fund)
- Funded Career Technical Partnership Grants at \$7.7M (Governor and House each funded at \$4.7M)
- Funded Mental Health Supports and Wraparounds at \$4.5M (Governor funded at \$6M; House did not fund)
- Funded Social Emotional Learning Grants at \$3.5M (Governor funded at \$3M; House did not fund)
- Funded the Genocide Education Trust fund at \$3M (Governor funded at \$3M; House funded at \$500K)
- Funded Hate Crimes line item at \$1M (Governor funded at \$1M; House funded at \$425K)

SWM Did not fund these items that were found in either the House or Governor's Budget

- Did not fund Green School Works (Governor did not fund; House funded at \$25M)
- Declined to fund DESE Targeted Assistance for School Districts (A new proposal from the Governor at \$10M; the House also declined to fund this)
- Did not fund Chapter 70 ELL Reduction Offset (This was a new proposal from the House at \$10M)
- Did not fund Civics Education Grants (Governor also did not fund; House funded at \$2M)

SWM funded these items at either the same level or below the House or Governor's Budget

- Funded METCO at \$29.9M (Governor funded at \$29.9M; House funded at \$35M)
- Funded ELL Programs at \$5.2M (Governor funded at \$5.2M; House funded at \$5.7M)

\$70 MILLION ANNOUNCED FOR CTE PROGRAMS

On April 30, Governor Healey announced that \$70 million for CTE program grants will be directed to nearly 30 schools in the Commonwealth. The funding comes from the fiscal 2025 surtax supplemental budget.

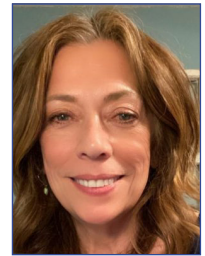
The awards are expected to create up to 2,500 new career technical seats, available because of the expansion of 23 existing programs, the introduction of 27 new programs, and upgrades to facilities, equipment, and technology.

Among the schools that will benefit from the grants are Assabet Valley Voc. Tech., which will receive \$3.75 million to develop two new programs focused on public safety and veterinary science. Hands-on learning through the public safety track will feature a mock dispatch centers and forensics lab, partnerships with local fire and EMS departments, and agreements with community colleges to allow students to earn degrees and certifications. Students can also train for entry-level positions in animal care and veterinary services and potentially earn two certifications.

Other grants include \$3.5 million to Chicopee Comprehensive High School for HVAC and plumbing programs; \$2 million to Upper Cape Cod Regional Vocational Technical in Bourne to expand welding and metal fabrication programs; \$1.75 million to New Bedford High School for early education and child care programs; and \$4 million for the plumbing program at Taconic High School in Pittsfield.

An additional 400 to 600 career technical seats are in the pipeline through a separate state funding opportunity, according to Healey's office. Districts have submitted applications for a \$15 million

MASC Field Director Named a Commonwealth Heroine



Elizabeth "Liz" Lafond, MASC Field Director for the Connecticut Valley and Berkshire districts, is one of the 147 women from across the state being honored as the Class of 2026 Commonwealth Heroines. Sponsored by the MA Commission on the Status of Women (MCSW), Liz was nominated by Senator Jake Oliveira. The award, which recognizes women leaders in industry, business, nonprofit, education, advocacy, and more, will be formally presented by the Governor in Gardner Auditorium at the State House on Wednesday, June 24.

"The Commonwealth Heroines are women who don't make the news, but make all the difference in their communities," said MCSW Chairwoman Mary-dith Tuitt. "Thousands of women in every community across the Commonwealth perform unheralded acts on a daily basis that make our homes, neighborhoods, cities, and towns better places to live. Commonwealth Heroines use their time, talent, spirit, and enthusiasm to enrich the lives of others in their community. They are mentors, volunteers, and innovators - they are the glue that keeps a community together."

Lafond joined MASC as a Field Director in 2019. A former ten-year member of the Hatfield School Committee and currently a member of the Granby School Committee, she also served for over three decades as Executive Assistant to the Holyoke School Committee. In 2011, she was nominated for Life Membership in MASC.

capital grant pilot program, aimed at expanding and upgrading programs at "comprehensive" high schools that also offer career technical training.

TEACHER LICENSURE REGULATIONS UPDATE

At its April meeting, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approved proposed amendments to the state regulations on teacher licensure. The final proposed regulations can be found on the department's website (www.mass.edu). As a result of these changes, there will be four alternatives to taking the MTEL communications and literacy test:

- completion of a Massachusetts-approved Educator Preparation Program;
- license from another state;
- master's or doctorate degree from

an accredited degree program;

- 2 years of field-based experience and attestation from school or district leader.

The regulation change is good for three years and requires annual reporting to the Board on impact and progress. The change will come at no cost to candidates. The Department will begin to take applications in the upcoming week.

MASC NEWS UPDATE

HOUSE PROPOSED SOCIAL MEDIA/CELL PHONE LEGISLATION

The MASC April Bulletin included a summary of a recently passed MA House of Representatives bill that would require, among other things, that social media companies

continued on page 4

continued from page 3

implement age verification systems to prohibit certain access by users under the age of 14; and require school districts to prohibit the use of personal electronic devices (cell phones) during the school day.

This bill differs significantly from a bill passed earlier by the Senate, most notably in that the Senate left cell phone policy to the determination of local districts.

For the bill to move forward, the two chambers need to agree on language. Only then can it be sent to the Governor for her signature.

As such, no school district policy changes are required or recommended at the current time. It remains a matter of local determination.

As always, MASC will keep you updated on developments.

MASC POLICY NEWSLETTER

MASC recently shared the May 2026 Policy newsletter, including updates on restraint and seclusion and administration of medication. As some of these require an update by August of 2026, please be sure to review promptly. This newsletter can be found under "Policy Services" on our website: <https://www.masc.org/services/policy-services/updated-new-policies/>



MASC SUMMER INSTITUTE

Saturday, June 27, 2026

UMASS Amherst Henry M. Thomas III Center
1500 Main Street, Suite 260, Springfield MA

Program: 9:30am-2:30 pm (includes lunch)

- **Federal Legislation and Regulation; Political Update**

Presenter: Phelton Moss, Managing Director-Government Relations, NSBA

- **AI in Education: A Master Class for School Committees**

Presenter: Matthew Joseph, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent-Technology & Learning; New Bedford Public Schools

Check your mailbox and online for registration information

Friday, June 5 | Noon-1:00pm | **MASC Learning Lunch**

Topic: Chair Chat

Saturday, June 6 | 8:00am-4:00pm | **MASC Charting the Course**

Crocker Elementary School, Fitchburg

Saturday, June 20 | 8:00am-4:00pm | **Charting the Course**

Tantasqua Regl. Junior High School, Fiskdale



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