

MASC Legislative Update: Summer 2026

8.11.2026

Bridget Garabedian, MASC Legislative Committee Chair | Tewksbury School Committee

Anthony Andronico, MASC Operations Director & Lobbyist

Sean Costello, MASC Field Director & Lobbyist

Agenda

**The FY27
Budget: What
it means for
K-12 Education**

**Education
Policy: Items
That Crossed (or
nearly crossed)
the Finish Line**

**Education
Policy:
Items That
Made Notable
Progress**

The FY27 Budget: What it means for K-12 Education



FY27 State Budget: The Big Picture

- **\$63.42 billion** total state budget
- **3.9% increase** over the FY26 GAA
 - \$54 million more than the Governor's proposal
 - \$50 million more than the Senate proposal
 - \$500,000 more than the House proposal
- **FY27 completes the scheduled phase-in of the Student Opportunity Act (SOA)**

Chapter 70: The Core of School Funding

- **\$7.66 Billion in Chapter 70 Aid**
 - Nearly **4% increase** over FY26
 - **Final year of the SOA's** scheduled funding phase-in
 - Minimum aid increases to \$160 per student (Up \$10 YoY)
 - Approximately 84% of Massachusetts school districts are projected to qualify for minimum aid in FY27
- **Other major funding connected to districts**
 - **Circuit Breaker:** \$806.6M total (10% increase YoY from \$733M)
 - \$654.6M in operating budget
 - \$152M in supplemental budget
 - **Charter School Reimbursement:** \$200.4M (up .7% YoY from \$199M)
 - **UGGA:** \$1.36B, a \$40M increase

Major Education Investments

Transportation - \$153.8M total

- \$58.4M — school transportation
- \$57.2M — regional transportation
- \$35.2M — McKinney-Vento transportation
- \$3M — out-of-district vocational transportation

School Meals - \$180M

- Maintains universal free school meals at FY26 funding levels

Rural School Aid - \$20M

- \$16M in FY27 budget
- \$4M in supplemental budget
- \$4M increase over FY26
- 2022 Special Commission on Rural Schools identified \$60M annually as the need

Pre-K - \$15.5M

- Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative
- \$5M less than FY26

New & Targeted Investments

- **New initiatives**

- \$4M — ESOL Reserve
- \$1M — Cell Phone-Free Public Schools Grant Program
- \$16.5M — Regionalization & Shared Services Grant Program

- **Continued investments**

- \$40M — Early Literacy & High-Dosage Tutoring
 - \$20M each
 - Level funding year over year
- \$30.9M — METCO
 - \$1M increase over FY26
 - A few million shy of the full funding ask

Policy in the Budget: Special Ed. Transportation

Special Education Transportation

- Districts must provide detailed cost information on out-of-district transportation contracts
- DESE must create a centralized database of out-of-district transportation providers
- State will conduct additional study of the special education transportation marketplace

Policy in the Budget: Foundation Budget Review Commission

A new 29-member commission will review Massachusetts' K-12 funding formula.

- MASC will have a seat on the commission
- Commission will host at least four public hearings across MA
- May examine other education finance programs
- Recommendations that increase state costs must identify the resources needed
- Final report due October 2028

The New FBRC Why It Matters To MASC

The FBRC creates an opportunity to examine:

- **Chapter 70 funding** — What should the foundation budget look like after the Student Opportunity Act phase-in?
- **Rural schools** — How should the funding formula better account for the challenges facing rural districts?
- **Voc-Tech capacity** — How should the Commonwealth account for the costs and capacity needs of vocational-technical education?

The bigger question — What should Massachusetts' school funding formula look like for the next generation?

Education Policy: Items That Crossed (or nearly crossed) the Finish Line



Student Literacy

H5511 – An Act Relative To Teacher Preparation And Student Literacy (Signed)

- **K-3 Reading Curricula** - Districts must select K-3 reading curricula backed by scientific research that has been proven to improve student competency in reading, vocabulary, oral language, and comprehension. DESE must develop a free, high-quality K-3 literacy curriculum that will be available to all districts.
- **Early Literacy and Dyslexia Screenings** - Codifies dyslexia / literacy screening requirements and requires schools to develop screening protocols for potential neurological learning disabilities. Also requires districts to assess students' reading ability and review their progress at least twice per school year from K-3.
- **Teacher Apprenticeships and Prep Programs** - Expands the Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program to support paid teaching apprenticeships in high-needs districts. Supports DESE's expedited review of teacher education programs to ensure they use evidence-based literacy training.

PROTECT Act

H5620 – An Act Promoting Rule of Law, Oversight, Trust, And Equal Constitutional Treatment (Signed)

- **Enhances Protections at Sensitive Locations.** Bars civil immigration arrests without a judicial warrant at schools, childcare centers, & other sensitive areas.
- Directed that the **public will receive multilingual guidance** on responding to enforcement encounters, confirming an officer's credentials, and understanding their rights.
- **Prohibits State & Municipal Participation in Immigration Enforcement.** Keeps state & local police out of federal civil immigration enforcement, barring the use of local resources for that purpose, or detention, based solely on a civil immigration detainer.
- Directs DESE to develop **model policies in consultation with MASC** and others

Freedom to Read Law

S2726 – An Act Regarding Free Expression (Signed)

- ***Sets Expectations for School Library Materials.*** Requires materials be age-appropriate, serve an educational purpose, & be chosen based on staff's professional training. Personal/political/doctrinal views must remain out of the selection process.
- ***Requires Local Districts to Craft Policies.*** Requires all school districts to adopt their own policies on how to select library materials. All policies must align with [American Library Association standards](#). Directs the [MA Board of Library Commissioners \(BLC\)](#) and the MA Library System to share sample policies to help school committees create/revise their policies.
- ***Collects Data from Schools and Public Libraries.*** The BLC will collect data on challenges to books/materials and file an annual report with the Legislature. School districts will also submit a report to DESE containing the challenges they have received.
- ***Holds Librarians Harmless.*** Protects school employees from professional, civil, or criminal penalties based on their selection of library materials.
- ***Sets the Threshold for Removing a Book.***
 - A book's placement in the school library may only be challenged by staff, parents/guardians, & students.
 - Challenged books remain on the shelf until a public hearing has determined otherwise.
 - After holding a public hearing, a review committee of local school personnel would decide whether the material is devoid of educational, literary, artistic, personal, or social value, OR whether the material is not age-appropriate.
 - The local school committee would then vote on whether to remove the challenged material.
 - Appeals may be made by students or parents/guardians by challenging the decision in Superior Court.

Cell Phones & Youth Social Media

S2581 | S3164 | H5366 (Conference Committee)

- **Cellphones**

- House/Senate each have a bell-to-bell ban and direct districts to create their own policies.
- The Senate would require DESE to approve each districts cellphone policy. This version would also create exceptions for medical needs, IEPs/disability accommodations, etc.
- The House would instruct DESE to provide guidance, recommendations, and a model policy (not approve the policies individually). It would also create a DESE-run pilot in 10 districts to test technology that renders devices inoperable on school grounds

- **Social Media**

- The House would block those under 14 entirely and require parental consent for 14- and 15-year-olds. LGBTQ+/protected-status data would be shielded from parental approval process.
- The Senate does not have an age restriction, but strips out addictive features like autoplay, infinite scroll, and algorithmic feeds. Senate also removes location sharing for minors by default.

Data Privacy and Child Welfare Legislation

Data Privacy S2619 and H5479 (Conference Committee)

- House and Senate versions would each:
 - Ban the Sale of Children's Data. Prohibits all entities from selling minors' personal data.
 - Block Targeted Ads for Minors. Prohibits companies from collecting or processing a child's personal information for the purposes of targeting ads.

Child Welfare H5629 – An Act enhancing child welfare protections (laid before Gov.)

- Creates a DCF Education Unit tasked with academic monitoring, support, and coordination with school districts
- Requires that DCF and DESE establish clear enrollment timelines and record transfer standards for children in DCF custody who move schools
- Creates a commission to examine a digital education portfolio system

Teacher Retirement Plus

H4361/S3109 – An Act Relative to Benefits for Teachers (Conference Committee)

- Teacher RetirementPlus (R+) is an enhanced pension program for public school educators
- In 2001, when R+ was first introduced, many teachers encountered a confusing enrollment process.
- An August 2023 ruling made it clear that legislation was needed to fix this issue.
- Legislation is now in conference committee that would allow teachers hired before July 1, 2001 who did not initially elect to participate in R+ to have second chance.
- Conference Committee is sorting out eligible job titles, opt-in windows, and how the buy-back is calculated. Bill would give an estimated 6,500–8,500 current teachers another opportunity to enter R+.

Education Policy: Items That Made Notable Progress



Establish & Fund Financial Literacy Curriculum

H.4670 An Act relative to personal financial literacy education

Sponsored by House Ways & Means

Status: Unanimously passed the House on October 29 and has since been referred to Senate W&M

Permitted uses of funds:

- Development, procurement, and distribution of financial literacy curriculum and materials.
- Professional development for educators (trainings, seminars, conferences, materials).

DESE responsibilities:

- Provide access to curricular materials
- Offer PD opportunities
- Annual reporting on the status and progress of personal financial literacy instruction.

Mandates instruction (starting SY 2026) for all middle- and high-school students:

The curriculum covers core personal finance competencies—from income, budgeting, saving, banking, credit, major transactions, and investment fundamentals to insurance, asset protection, and fraud prevention—along with emerging financial technologies such as crypto, online commerce, and digital trading.

Creates a Financial Literacy Trust Fund to support middle- and high-school personal finance education

Rethinking Reserve Funds

H.2303 /S.1469 - An Act relative to special education reserve funds

Sponsored by Rep. Kathleen LaNatra & Sen. Jake Oliveira

Status: H.2303 is pending a vote of the full House | S.1469 is in Senate Committee on Rules

Increases the allowable percentage tied to annual net school spending from 2% to 5%.

H.2304 /S.1468 - An Act relative to a regional school assessment reserve fund

Sponsored by Rep. Kathleen LaNatra & Sen. Jake Oliveira

Status: H.2304 is pending a vote of the full House | S.1468 is in Senate Committee on Rules

Authorizes the establishment of a Regional School Assessment Reserve Fund and to appropriate or transfer money to it, usable only in fiscal years when the Regional Assessment increases by more than 3.5% over the prior year.

Limits the fund balance to 10% of the municipality's annual Regional Assessment.

Membership on the Board of Elementary & Secondary Education

H.729 /S.2868 - An Act relative to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

Sponsored by Rep. Ultrino & Sens. Jehlen & Rausch

Status: H.729 is pending a vote of the full House | S.2868 is in SWM

The legislation would repeal a provision of Massachusetts law that prohibits practicing educators and sitting school committee members from serving on the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education; and the legislation would reconstitute the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education by to include members with expertise as licensed educators and members with expertise in public school governance.

Mandatory Recess

H.543 /S.417 - An Act relative to recess for elementary and middle school students

Sponsored by Rep. Decker & Sen. O'Connor

Status: H.543 is pending a vote of the full House | S.417 was sent to study

The legislation called for at least 20 minutes of uninterrupted, supervised, safe, and unstructured free-play recess per day which cannot be excluded from structured learning time requirements and may not increase the total number of hours required in the school year for Massachusetts elementary school students.

Graduation Framework Requirements Status

Preliminary Report – December 2025

MASC Position Paper / Webinar Briefing – May 2026

Final Report – June 2026

Next Steps – TBD

“Moving forward, the co-chairs recommend that the Governor and Legislature work together to enact legislation that will codify the requirements within this report, and that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) promulgate regulations on the requirements. The Executive Office of Education and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education are ready to support the work of moving forward with the necessary statutory and regulatory changes in the next legislative session.”

Looking Ahead

Interested in stepping up your involvement in MASC?

[Join a Committee!](#)

Items of Note:

- **Annual Joint Conference** – Nov. 4-6
- **Delegate Assembly** – Nov. 6
- **Potential Future Webinars:**
 - Federal Legislative Update
 - How to Advocate on The Local Level
- **Developing Priorities for the next legislative session** – Fall/Winter
- **Day on the Hill** – March/April



Questions and Discussion

Thank you for joining us – contact us anytime

617-523-8454

Bridget Garabedian brigara@gmail.com

Anthony Andronico aandronico@masc.org

Sean Costello scostello@masc.org