

legislative bulletin

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To: All School Committee Members and Superintendents

From: Stephen J. Finnegan, Esq.

Date: April 12, 2012

SUBJECT: HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS F.Y. 2013 BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 70 INCREASED

The F.Y.2013 House Ways and Means Committee budget recommendations include an increase of \$163 million to Chapter 70 (General Aid to Education) thereby increasing funding in that account to \$4.154 billion. This increase of \$18.5 million over the Governor's proposed budget will not only meet foundation budget requirements, but also will provide an additional \$40 per student increase to every district. The Governor's budget proposal, which contained an increase of \$145 million over F.Y.2012 funding, would have level-funded approximately two-thirds of the districts. You will find your district's House Ways and Means recommended Chapter 70 Aid in the Local Aid section of the budget, which may be found at the MASC website.

The House budget also contains good news for municipalities due to an increase over the Governor's proposal of \$65 million in Unrestricted General Government Aid. The combined increases in both Chapter 70 and Municipal Aid will assist school districts in crafting reasonable budgets in an economy that is at best sputtering along.

SPECIAL EDUCATION CIRCUIT BREAKER, REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION, CHARTER SCHOOL FUNDING

The Special Education Circuit Breaker provides state funding for the extra-ordinary expenses associated with certain special education expenses. The House has proposed funding the Circuit Breaker at \$221.5 million, which represents an \$8.4 million increase over funding from F.Y.2012

The Governor's budget proposed that Regional School Transportation be level-funded at \$43.5 million. The House budget recommends a \$2 million increase for total funding of \$45.5 million. The costs of transporting students have undoubtedly increased during the past year and Ways and Means has reasonably addressed this issue. MASC appreciates the House funding of this account in a difficult economic climate.

Monies for districts sending students to charter schools have been level funded at \$71.5 million. Based upon the new charters coming online in F.Y.2013 it is estimated that more funding will be needed to stay at a true level funding base.

MANDATED HOMELESS TRANSPORTATION FUNDED BY HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS

Over the past year the issue of school districts mandated transportation costs for homeless students under the McKinney-Vento Federal Law and the Commonwealth's implementation of same, has been the subject of a determination by State Auditor Bump through the Division of Local Mandates. The Auditor determined that the requirement for school districts to provide homeless students transportation to their previous schools was an unfunded mandate. MASC and MASS were asked by Auditor Bump to assist in the documentation to determine the cost of such transportation for F.Y.2012. As a result of the statewide survey, it was determined that approximately \$11.3 million was the projected level of expenditure by local school districts. It was determined that at least ten school districts anticipated spending in excess of \$200,000.00.

The Legislature, prompted by the determination of the Auditor, expressed a desire to fund this mandate. Over 100 legislators signed a petition requesting funding of the mandate, in part, due to the advocacy of MASC and other municipal associations. The end result of these collaborative efforts resulted in the House budget creating a new account to fully fund the \$11.3 million estimate of necessary reimbursements to meet the homeless student transportation mandate. MASC applauds and is appreciative of the efforts of the Auditor, the legislative leadership, and all of the signatories to the petition to create this new account. Moreover, this effort by Auditor Bump will undoubtedly reinvigorate the anti-mandate law passed by the voters in 1980.

KINDERGARTEN GRANTS AND OTHER ACCOUNTS OF INTEREST

The Ways and Means budget recommends funding the Kindergarten Expansion grants account at \$25 million an increase of \$2 million.

The Adult Basic Education account has been increased in the proposed budget by \$1.4 million bringing total funding to \$29 million.

A new account has been funded by Ways and Means in the amount of \$250,000.00 to support financial literacy programs in school districts.

The House proposed budget includes a new \$1 million initiative to assist school districts with the implementation of advanced placement programs.