

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

To: All School Committee Members and Superintendents
From: Stephen J. Finnegan Esq., MASC General Counsel
Re: The Governor's F.Y.2015 Budget, House 2
Date: January 24, 2014

GOVERNOR PROPOSES AN INCREASE TO CHAPTER 70 EDUCATION AID

Governor Patrick's proposed budget provides \$100 million in new Chapter 70 money to local school districts, which brings the total funding for Chapter 70 to \$4.4 billion dollars. The increase in Chapter 70 aid will keep school districts at foundation levels of spending, and guarantees an increase of \$25 per pupil for every district. House 2 eliminates the cap of pre-kindergarteners included in the Chapter 70 district enrollment. Also, House 2 recommends providing \$3.1 million through kindergarten expansion grants to provide districts without full day kindergarten classes an opportunity to provide such education.

The Governor also proposes targeted funds to improve student performance, including \$4.5 million to finance expanded learning time for middle school students, as well as \$3.1 million in new funding for schools that choose to voluntarily engage in innovative approaches (Innovation Schools) to improving student performance, and additional funding for comprehensive supports to students in Gateway Cities.

You may find your local aid amount on the MASC website at www.masc.org.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION: REGIONAL, HOMELESS AND NON-RESIDENTIAL

The Governor recommends level-funding regional school transportation at \$51.5 million for F.Y.2015. MASC will work closely with other associations to monitor and seek additional funding as necessary for regional school transportation.

House 2 also level funds homeless student transportation at \$7.3 million, which is well below full funding. MASC, with other willing parties, will support increased funding for this account.

Non-resident student transportation, which funds in part transportation of students to vocational schools when their district school does not offer particular programs, was not funded in the Governor's budget. Previously, this account contained a \$3 million appropriation.

CIRCUIT BREAKER AND METCO: NO INCREASE PROPOSED

The so-called circuit breaker account that provides funding for extraordinary special education costs has been level-funded at \$252.5 million. This represents the highest funding for this account since its inception.

The METCO account has also been level-funded at \$18.6 million.

POTHOLE ACCOUNT

Governor Patrick did not recommend funding the foundation reserve (pothole) account. The F.Y.2014 budget included this account with an appropriation of \$2 million. This line item addresses the concerns of municipalities that experience extraordinary increases in their minimum required local contribution.

OTHER ACCOUNTS OF INTEREST

The Governor proposes decreases to the MCAS Low Scoring Support account from \$12.6 million to \$5.8 million and the Targeted Intervention in Underperforming Schools account from \$8.9 million to \$7.7 million.

RETIRED TEACHERS HEALTHCARE COSTS

As you are aware (see May 23, 2013 *Legislative Bulletin*), Section 3 of the State Budget has long barred DESE from considering costs for retired teachers to be part of net school spending for any districts in which said costs were not considered part of such spending in fiscal year 1994. The language in Section 3 concerning retired teacher costs was deleted in the F.Y.2014 budget, however, very little changed in terms of net school spending calculations. The Governor's proposal contains the long-standing bar to considering retired teacher costs as part of net school spending unless communities opted to consider such costs within net school spending by fiscal year 1994.

FOUNDATION BUDGET REVIEW

COMMISSION

MASC and other associations have supported the reestablishment of this Commission that was part of the 1993 Education Reform Act. This proposed Commission shall seek to determine the educational and related programs and services necessary to achieve the Commonwealth's educational goals. MASC is a member of the Commission, and we thank the Governor for the inclusion of this important matter in his proposed F.Y.2015 budget.

SPECIAL EDUCATION INFLATION RATE FREEZE

Section 21 of the Governor's budget requires the operational services division to set rates for approved private special education schools in fiscal year 2015 at the same level calculated for fiscal year 2014 with certain limited exceptions.

DAY ON THE HILL

THE STATE HOUSE, BOSTON

TUESDAY, APRIL 29, 2014

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