

LEGISLATIVE Bulletin

To: All School Committee Members and Superintendents
From: Stephen J. Finnegan Esq., MASC General Counsel
Date: April 10, 2014
RE: The House Ways and Means Committee F.Y. 2015 Budget

LOCAL AID RESOLUTION INCREASE TO CHAPTER 70 PROPOSED IN HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS BUDGET

The local aid resolution adopted by the House and Senate in mid-March has been added to the House Ways and Means Budget and provides nearly \$100 million to local school districts, which brings the total funding for Chapter 70 to \$4.4 billion. 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. Also, the local aid resolution includes a \$25.5 million increase to Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA) for an F.Y. 2015 funding level \$945.8 million.

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

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION: REGIONAL, HOMELESS AND NON-RESIDENTIAL

The Governor recommended level-funding regional school transportation at \$51.5 million for F.Y. 2015. House Ways and Means has proposed a \$2 million increase in this account for a total appropriation of \$53.5 million. MASC will work closely with other associations to seek additional funding as necessary for regional school transportation.

The Governor proposed level funding homeless student transportation at \$7.3 million, which is well below full funding. Ways and

Means also funded this account at \$7.3 million. 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. The House added this account and proposed a \$1.5 million appropriation for this account.

CIRCUIT BREAKER FULLY FUNDED

The so-called circuit breaker account that provides funding for extraordinary special education costs was level funded at \$252.5 million by the Governor. The Ways and Means Committee recommended funding the circuit breaker with a \$5 million increase that brings total funding to \$257.5 million. This represents the highest funding for this account since its inception, and the Committee states that the account is fully funded.

CHARTER SCHOOL REIMBURSEMENT INCREASED

Districts that send pupils to charter schools receive funding from the Commonwealth for several years thereafter. During the past two years the account reimbursing districts has been underfunded. The House Ways and Means Committee has recommended a \$5 million increase to this account for a total of \$80 million, which, while helpful, still leaves a significant shortfall for sending districts.

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. The House Ways and Means Committee recommends the reestablishment of this account with a \$1 million appropriation. This line item addresses the concerns of municipalities that experience extraordinary increases in their minimum required local contribution

RETIRED TEACHERS HEALTHCARE COSTS

As you are aware (see February 20, 2014 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 the net school spending calculations. The Gover-

nor's proposal contains the long-standing bar to consider retired teacher costs as part of the net school spending unless communities opted to consider such costs within net school spending by fiscal year 1994. The House Ways and Means Committee recommendation concurs with the Governor's proposal.

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 will work to include this measure in the House Budget.

The budget will be debated during Day on the Hill. Be there!

DAY ON THE HILL

TUESDAY, APRIL 29

Are YOU Registered?

KEEPING THE LIGHTS ON FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

PROGRAM

- Meet your Legislators: FY15 Budget Discussions will be in Progress
 - Issues Analysis
- Communications Strategies: Bringing the Message Home
 - Vocational schools Luncheon Buffet

8:45am-3:00pm

The State House, Boston