

2025-2026

# Legislative Priorities



## Funding Our Schools to Meet the Needs of All Students

Public school districts across the Commonwealth are facing severe fiscal challenges that threaten to undermine their capacity to deliver high-quality public education to all students. The legislation below offers a comprehensive platform to address the main drivers of the public school fiscal crisis and provide the funding our students and educators need to succeed now and in the years to come. The crisis could be addressed most rapidly by these reforms being incorporated into the FY26 state budget.

### **H.678/S.388 | *An Act to fix the chapter 70 inflation adjustment***

**Lead Sponsors:** Rep. Orlando Ramos (D-Springfield) | Sen. Robyn Kennedy (D-Worcester)

- Makes a technical fix to the Chapter 70 formula so that state funding to public school districts keeps pace with inflation over time. Absent this fix, Chapter 70 will not account for actual inflation above the current 4.5% inflation cap and districts will never receive the real-dollar aid they were promised under the Student Opportunity Act.

### **H.517/S.314 | *An Act to provide a sustainable future for rural schools***

**Lead Sponsors:** Rep. Natalie Blais (D-Sunderland) | Sen. Jo Comerford (D-Northampton)

- Increases support for rural school districts through a variety of means, including through the establishment of several funds to provide additional financial resources that help address their unique fiscal challenges.

### **H.697/S.328 | *An Act relative to full funding of regional school district transportation***

**Lead Sponsors:** Rep. Margaret Scarsdale (D-Pepperell) & Rep. Kristin Kassner (D-Hamilton) | Sen. John Cronin (D-Fitchburg)

- Requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to annually request full funding for regional school transportation reimbursements, which historically have been underfunded.

### **H.597/S.348 | *An Act ensuring full reimbursement for in-district school transportation costs / An Act providing in-district transportation funding***

**Lead Sponsors:** Rep. Jim Hawkins (D-Attleboro) | Sen. Lydia Edwards (D-Boston)

- Since school districts, other than regional school districts, do not currently receive reimbursements for transportation, this bill creates a four-year funding schedule for reimbursements for in-district school transportation, both for regular day and in-district special education programs. These reimbursements are already required under state law but have not been funded for two decades. Under this legislation, reimbursements will start with 25% of the total state obligation in FY26 before reaching 100% in FY29.

Please contact MTA Government Relations if you have any questions or require any additional information.  
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**H.691/S.430 | *An Act relative to the long-term fiscal health and sustainability of special education in the Commonwealth***

**Lead Sponsors:** Rep. Adam Scanlon (D-North Attleborough) & Rep. Mike Kushmerek (D-Fitchburg) | Sen. Jake Oliveira (D-Ludlow)

- Increases the reimbursement rate for the Special Education Circuit Breaker program from 75% to 90% of eligible special education costs, lowers the cost threshold for expenses to become eligible for reimbursement under the program and creates a commission to study and make recommendations on special education funding in the Commonwealth.

**H.577/S.389 | *An Act honoring the Commonwealth's commitment to public school districts***

**Lead Sponsors:** Rep. Brandy Fluker-Reid (D-Boston) | Sen. Robyn Kennedy (D-Worcester)

- Increases funding to public school districts that lose funding to charter schools by adding a fourth year to the charter school tuition reimbursement schedule and raising the reimbursement rate in the second year of the schedule.

**H.544/S.369 | *An Act to establish the Whole Child Grant Program***

**Lead Sponsors:** Rep. Marjorie Decker (D-Cambridge) | Sen. Adam Gomez (D-Springfield)

- Creates a formula grant to provide per-pupil funding to public school districts to hire more school counselors, Education Support Professionals and other educators, and allow for other critical investments that support the well-being of students and educators.

## **High-Quality, Debt-Free Public Higher Education**

The Commonwealth has in recent years made meaningful progress in expanding access to our public colleges and universities and in helping to address the student debt crisis. Yet, there is still more work to be done to realize the promise of a true high-quality, debt-free public higher education system. The legislation below moves Massachusetts closer to this goal by prioritizing the success of all students and ensuring that all of our dedicated faculty and staff receive the fair wages and benefits needed to recruit and retain a strong workforce.

**H.1436/S.929 | *An Act relative to debt-free public higher education***

**Lead Sponsors:** Rep. Natalie Higgins (D-Leominster) | Sen. Jamie Eldridge (D-Acton)

- Declares that free public higher education is a right of all residents of Massachusetts, provides free tuition and fees for all students and creates a grant for students who meet the income eligibility for federal Pell Grants that will cover the additional costs of attendance, including, but not limited to, room and board, books and supplies, transportation and personal expenses.

### **H.1429/S.940 | *An Act Promoting an Adjunct Bill of Rights***

**Lead Sponsors:** Rep. Patricia Duffy (D-Holyoke) & Rep. Sean Garballey (D-Arlington) | Sen. Paul Mark (D-Becket)

- Makes adjunct faculty who teach half-time or more at one or more public institutions of higher education eligible for a state pension (and the ORP) and health insurance. It also requires that the contribution for adjuncts enrolled in the OBRA retirement savings plan be paid for by the state, ensures wage parity for adjuncts and provides adjuncts with priority consideration for part-time and non-tenure track teaching assignments.
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### **H.2185/S.1365 | *An Act to provide fair wages to employees of public institutions of higher education***

**Lead Sponsors:** Rep. Andy Vargas (D-Haverhill) | Sen. Pavel Payano (D-Lawrence)

- Ensures that future wages of public higher education employees are at or above the national average when adjusted for cost of living and requires the Commonwealth to pay for the full cost of fringe benefits and collective bargaining agreements.
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### **H.1426/S.949 | *An Act to provide green and healthy public colleges and universities and address their deferred maintenance needs***

**Lead Sponsors:** Rep. Manny Cruz (D-Salem) & Rep. Aaron Saunders (D-Belchertown) | Sen. Jake Oliveira (D-Ludlow)

- Creates a commission relative to energy and environmental improvements on public higher education campuses and a fund to support the commission's recommendations. It also requires the Commonwealth to assume the existing capital debt of public higher education institutions and to cover the costs for future capital projects, including deferred maintenance.
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### **H.2820/S.1364 | *An Act streamlining state employee collective bargaining***

**Lead Sponsors:** Rep. Rodney Elliott (D-Lowell) | Sen. Pavel Payano (D-Lawrence)

- Deems collective bargaining agreements to be approved 30 days after their submission to the Legislature unless they are withdrawn by the governor or rejected by a vote of the Legislature. It also allows for existing funds that are held in reserve account to be used to fund the collective bargaining agreements.

## Ensuring a Dignified Retirement

Educators provide dedicated public service while often earning significantly less than workers in the private sector with comparable degrees and qualifications. That is why the Commonwealth promises retired educators and other public employees a secure and dignified retirement. To ensure this promise is kept, the legislation below both addresses harmful provisions and practices and increases economic security for current and future retirees. In doing so, it also makes the education profession a more attractive and financially feasible career for prospective educators.

### **H.2812/S.1817 | *An Act to provide fair and affordable public retiree benefits***

**Lead Sponsors:** Rep. Dan Donahue (D-Worcester) | Sen. Julian Cyr (D-Truro)

- Ensures increased economic security for retired public employees, including by raising the base on which the annual state pension COLA is calculated. The COLA base has not been raised in over a decade.

### **H.2932/S.1884 | *An Act relative to benefits for teachers / An Act relative to teacher retirement election***

**Lead Sponsors:** Rep. Alice Peisch (D-Wellesley) | Sen. Liz Miranda (D-Boston)

- Allows teachers hired before July 1, 2001, who did not provide a written election to participate in RetirementPlus, to have a second opportunity to do so.

### **H.2769/ S.1921 | *An Act relative to retirement equity for parenting teachers***

**Lead Sponsors:** Rep. Simon Cataldo (D-Concord) & Rep. Sean Garballey (D-Arlington) | Sen. John Velis (D-Westfield)

- Allows full-time teachers with at least 20 years of service who reduced their work time to meet the demands of child-rearing or family care and still worked at least half-time during that period to buy back time so that those five years count as full years toward their retirement.

### **H.2809/S.1794 | *An Act requiring administrators of certain retirement plans to disclose conflicts of interest***

**Lead Sponsors:** Carol Doherty (D-Taunton) | Sen. Mike Brady (D-Brockton)

- Requires that municipal employees be provided with information on the fee ratio and return, net of fees, upon their enrollment in a 403b retirement plan as well as information on the compensation paid to any person who is providing investment advice.

### **H.39 | *An Act relative to the SMART Plan***

**Lead Sponsors:** State Treasurer Deb Goldberg (D-Brookline)

- Automatically enrolls new state employees in the state's deferred compensation plan (the SMART plan) and allows other governmental bodies to elect to automatically enroll new employees in their deferred 457 compensation plans. The state's SMART plan provides public employees with quality, low-fee defined contribution retirement options.

## Policies to Create the Schools our Students Deserve

Historic victories – the Student Opportunity Act, Fair Share Amendment and Question 2 to replace the MCAS graduation requirement – have addressed important needs in our public schools and created an unprecedented opportunity to reimagine public education. The legislation below builds on these achievements by offering a comprehensive vision for public schools that prepare all students for success throughout their lives. It also creates working conditions for educators that will allow them to meet the needs of all students and help schools to recruit and retain a strong and diverse educator workforce.

### **H.596/S.426 | *An Act to ensure that all students are prepared for future success***

**Lead Sponsors:** Rep. Jim Hawkins (D-Attleboro) | Sen. Jake Oliveira (D-Ludlow)

- Makes MassCore a required program of study for high school students statewide, with funding support to school districts and a public process to implement the new requirement, and creates a commission to study and make recommendations on more holistic and accurate methods of assessing students that align with the skills and knowledge that we want our students to learn and develop.

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### **H.733/S.370 | *An Act relative to educator pay***

**Lead Sponsors:** Rep. Erika Uytterhoeven (D-Somerville) & Rep. Tara Hong (D-Lowell) | Sen. Adam Gomez (D-Springfield)

- Establishes a statewide minimum salary of \$55,000 for Education Support Professionals and increases the minimum salary for teachers to \$70,000, while also creating a process for future increases and a multi-year reimbursement schedule for school districts to help cover the associated cost increases.

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### **H.2078/S.1311 | *An Act uplifting families and securing the right to strike for certain public employees***

**Lead Sponsors:** Rep. Mike Connolly (D-Cambridge) & Rep. Erika Uytterhoeven (D-Somerville) | Sen. Jamie Eldridge (D-Acton)

- Authorizes educators and other public employees, except for public safety personnel, to legally strike after six months of negotiations if they have not been able to reach an agreement. It also ensures that the right to free speech is no longer restricted for public employees and their unions as it relates to discussing or supporting a strike.

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

**Lead Sponsors:** Rep. Marjorie Decker (D-Cambridge) | Sen. Patrick O'Connor (R-Weymouth)

- Ensures that all students in grades K-8 receive at least 30 minutes of free-play recess per school day. Presently, the time allotted to recess can vary dramatically from district to district despite the clear benefits associated with students receiving consistent access to recess and physical activity.

**H.2125/S.1339 | *An Act to provide paid family and medical leave to all educators***

**Lead Sponsors:** Rep. Vanna Howard (D-Lowell) | Sen. Pat Jehlen (D-Somerville)

- Expands the Commonwealth’s paid family and medical leave law to cover all public school educators and requires the state pay the employer’s share of the cost using funds from the Fair Share Amendment. This legislation also permits creditable service to be accrued during the time that leave is taken.

**H.3380/S.2104 | *An Act to strengthen the taxpayer protection act***

**Lead Sponsors:** Rep. David LeBoeuf (D-Worcester) | Sen. Mike Brady (D-Brockton)

- Strengthens the enforcement of the Taxpayer Protection Act (also known as the Pacheco Law) by clarifying the attorney general’s enforcement authority, and expands the law to cover public schools and account for hidden costs to the public before a service is privatized.