

## **SENATE PREPARING FOR FY20 BUDGET DEBATE**

**Please Call Your Senators Today and Ask them to Support Key Municipal and School Aid Priorities!**

May 1, 2019

Now that the House of Representatives has adopted their proposed fiscal 2020 state budget, all attention has turned to the Senate. The Senate Ways & Means Committee is developing a separate spending plan, and we expect to see a Senate budget committee recommendation within the next two weeks. This is the time to call your Senators to emphasize the importance of full funding for municipal and school aid priorities!

This is a great time to check in with your Senators – so that you can ask your Senators to contact the budget committee before the Senate Ways & Means budget is released. After the budget is released, Senators will be scrambling to file amendments, and then the debate will occur during a whirlwind of activity over 3 or 4 days.

The MMA testified at the joint House and Senate Ways & Means Committee's budget hearing in Fall River on March 18, and our budget testimony provides excellent talking points on the major municipal and school aid priorities.

[Please click here to read a copy of MMA's budget testimony](#)

[Please click here to read MMA's article summarizing the changes made by Representatives during last week's House budget debate](#)

Please talk to your Senators about these budget accounts and any others that might be a local priority.

Last year, there were almost 1,200 proposed amendments filed when the Senate debated the budget. The Senate Ways & Means recommendation may not be the last word on the Senate spending plan, but individual Senators will have their greatest influence from now through the end of the floor debate. That's why it is so important for you to contact them now to discuss the budget items that matter most to you.

Here are some of the priority highlights to discuss:

**UNRESTRICTED GENERAL GOVERNMENT AID (UGGA)** – Ask your Senators to fund the UGGA account at \$1.13 billion, which would provide an increase of \$29.7 million, or 2.7 percent, consistent with the “consensus” state tax revenue growth forecast. The House and Governor's budgets do this.

**REFORMING AND INCREASING PUBLIC SCHOOL FUNDING** – There are a number of Chapter 70 funding issues:

- Ask your Senators to implement the consensus Foundation Budget Review Commission reforms, including funding for employee benefits, special education costs, low-income students, and English Language Learners (the House provides a \$218 million increase to Chapter 70, while the Governor is proposing a \$200 million increase.)

- Ask your Senators to end the damage caused by the flawed charter school finance system (the House is proposing \$23 million more for charter school reimbursements, which is \$7 million more than the Governor's budget, but still far below full funding), and ask for a permanent solution, such as a cap on Chapter 70 diversions to charter schools, in the separate education finance bill that will be debated later in the session.

- Ask your Senators for adequate minimum aid of \$100 per student (the House is proposing \$30 per student, and the Governor is offering \$20 per student), so that no community is left behind, and all districts receive an adequate increase.

- Ask your Senators to add funding to address the unique challenges facing rural schools, especially those with declining enrollment.

**SPECIAL EDUCATION CIRCUIT BREAKER** – Ask your Senators to support full funding of the Special Education Circuit Breaker Program. (The House underfunds this account by approximately \$15 million, while the Governor's budget is \$20 million short.)

**STUDENT TRANSPORTATION REIMBURSEMENTS** – Ask your Senators to support full funding for: 1) reimbursements to regional school districts; 2) the transportation of homeless students under the McKinney-Vento program; and 3) transporting out-of-district vocational students.

**PAYMENTS IN LIEU OF TAXES (PILOT)** – Ask your Senators to support increased funding for the Commonwealth's obligations and commitments to the program for Payments in Lieu of Taxes for state-owned land (PILOT), at a minimum including funds to hold communities harmless from changes in property valuation.

**Please Call Your Senators Today to Support Municipal and School Accounts!**