



CHIP LEGISLATIVE, BUDGET & REGULATORY ACTION AGENDA 2021-2022 Update – 12/14/21

Social and Economic Priorities:

- **Fair Share Amendment (H.86– info at www.raiseupma.org):** the Fair Share Amendment is a legislative proposal to amend the Massachusetts Constitution, creating an additional 4% tax on the portion of a person’s annual income above \$1 million. The revenue generated would be dedicated to funding the public education system including public colleges and universities as well as the repair and maintenance of roads, bridges, and public transportation.
 - The Legislature approved putting this on the ballot and the public will vote on the amendment to allow the additional tax in November 2022. Educate yourself and your networks! www.raiseupma.org.
- **SAPHE 2.0 Bill (H.2329,) and funding:** This bill and budget request ensures minimum public health standards for every community, increases capacity and effectiveness by encouraging municipalities to share services, creates a uniform data collection and reporting system, and establishes a sustainable state funding mechanism to support local boards of health and health departments.
 - Referred to Public Health Committee, has had a hearing, had \$13 million in the budget for associated grants.
- **An Act concerning public assistance for working families and the creation of a pilot program to address the impacts of the cliff effect (S.119, H.208).** This bill would address a significant challenge for people living with very low incomes.
 - Referred to committee on Children, Families, and persons with disabilities. No hearing yet.
- **Create Office of Rural Policy for Massachusetts (H.503, S.265).** This bill supports a recommendation of the state’s new Rural Policy Plan.
 - Referred to Committee on Economic Development and Emerging Technologies. Hearing held.
- **An Act to Streamline Access to Critical Public Health and Safety-net Programs through Common Applications (H.1290, S.761).** This bill would allow those applying for MassHealth the option to automatically qualify for SNAP, childcare subsidies, WIC, fuel assistance, and housing subsidies.
 - Referred to Health Care Financing Committee, had a hearing. This bill in particular could benefit from organized, assertive advocacy. Information about the bill is here: <https://www.masslegalservices.org/content/its-time-finally-close-massachusetts-snap-gap->

[and-expand-common-apps-2021](#) and here: <https://www.projectbread.org/list-of-policies/close-the-snap-gap> Hearing held.

- **An Act establishing a Special Education Funding Reform Commission (S.295).** This bill addresses the issue that the state's formula for providing funding to school districts for special education costs relies upon an assumption that often does not come close to meeting the actual costs. It sets up a Commission to review the Commonwealth's system for funding special education and make recommendations for a more equitable system.
 - Referred to Committee on Education, hearing held.
- **An Act expanding access to higher education tuition and fee waivers for adopted foster children (S.826).** This bill would close a loophole in our financial aid system for adopted foster children that blocks them from using financial aid for courses taught at night or by outside experts with knowledge in their field.
 - Referred to Committee on Higher Education, hearing held.
- **Proposal for a legislative amendment to the Constitution relative to equity in state policy (S.21)** This bill proposes an amendment to the Constitution relative to equity in state policy.
 - Reported unfavorably out of Judiciary Committee and placed on file.

Health Behaviors Priorities:

- **An Act relative to an Agricultural Healthy Incentives Program (S.108, H.145).** This bill institutionalizes the HIP program and sets up a fund to support it.
 - Referred to the committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities. Hearing held.
- **An Act to Establish a Farm to School Grant Program (S.349, H.686).** This bill establishes a grant program to promote healthy eating and strengthen the agricultural economy.
 - Referred to Education Committee. No hearing yet
- **Food & Health Pilot Program (S.1403).** This bill establishes a program to test the impact of healthy food provision on for MassHealth enrollees with diabetes and other nutrition-related illness.
 - Referred to Joint Committee on Public Health, hearing held.
- **Green Futures Act (H.3292).** This bill provides a clear plan to sustainably and equitably raise green money to invest in state-wide green infrastructure, local aid for cities and towns, and green workforce development. An alarming 43% of our local youth report significant symptoms of anxiety and 42% report significant symptoms of depression, and the #1 thing that worries them is climate change (2021 FC/NQ Teen Health Survey).
 - Referred to Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy. No hearing yet. For more info: <https://www.greenfuturenowma.org/legislation>

Clinical Care Priorities:

- **State policy change increasing Mass Health and Commercial reimbursement rates for peer support roles (no bill #).** These reforms would value important roles held by people with lived experience like Recovery Coach, Peer Support Specialist, and Community Health Worker.
 - The state is proposing a broad "Roadmap for Behavioral Health Reform. The reform includes expansion of peer support, including expanding MassHealth coverage for peer specialists and recovery coaches, and more. You can learn about it here:

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/stakeholder-presentation-on-the-roadmap-for-behavioral-health-reform/download> Is this S.1287? If so, virtual hearing held 7/19/2021.

- **An Act Relative to Mental Health Providers (S.1262, H.1114).** This bill would expand the definition of behavior health reform “licensed mental health provider” to include occupational therapy practitioners, allowing clients with mental health and/or substance abuse diagnoses to further access and expand upon services available to them to achieve functional, independent, and meaningful lives.
 - Referred to Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use and Recovery, hearing held.

Physical Environment Priorities:

- **Funding and Modernizing Regional Transit Authorities (H.3413)** Reforms suggested by the 2019 Task Force on Regional Transit Authority Performance and Funding Report
 - Referred to Joint Committee on Transportation. Hearing held.
- **Rural-Friendly changes to certain state housing programs at DHCD and EOHEd (no bill #).** Revisions to make rural municipalities eligible and more competitive for state funding, including:
 - a rural set-aside in the Community Scale Housing Initiative (DHCD);
 - rebranding the 40R Starter Home Zoning to reflect the needs of new homeowners and seniors looking to downsize;
 - simplifying 40R to make it easier for towns with no planning staff to implement, and to be more adaptable to a town’s existing zoning;
 - amending the Housing Choice Initiative designation criteria to recognize regional best practices and allowing for multi-town designation applications.
 - Rural Policy Advisory Council working with DHCD on some of these changes.
- **An Act restoring the Commonwealth’s public housing (H.1417).** This bill would provide public housing authorities with the ability to leverage additional resources, including debt, for the rehabilitation and renovation of its properties.
 - Referred to Joint Committee on Housing. Hearing held.
- **An Act relative to transportation and environmental justice (H.3264, S.2138).** This bill would establish a transportation climate initiative trust fund and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the transportation sector.
 - Referred to Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy, no hearing yet.
- **An Act leveraging additional resources for Local Housing Authorities (S.872).** This bill will help restore the state’s public housing by allowing housing authorities to leverage new and additional resources for rehabilitation and redevelopment projects. This will help ensure that public housing will remain available for some of our most vulnerable residents.
 - Referred to Joint Committee on Housing. Hearing held.
- **An Act codifying the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (HD.3277) and An Act relative to the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (S.898).** These bills would strengthen the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) that currently serves more than 10,000 households. They would codify MRVP into state statute and make program improvements including reducing the tenant payment share, increasing administrative fees, requiring inspections, and improving data collection. MRVP’s tenant payment share is currently set at 35-40% of the tenant’s income, which is widely considered cost burdened. This would allow this program to subsidize a tenant’s rent to an affordable portion: 30% of income.

- Both Bills referred to Joint Committee on Housing. Hearing held.
- **An Act providing for Climate Change Adaptation Infrastructure and Affordable Housing investments in the Commonwealth (S.1853, H.2890).** This bill would double the deeds excise tax on the sale of real property and dedicate the estimated \$300 million in annual revenue towards affordable housing and climate sustainability. The deeds excise tax is not only directly linked to rising real estate prices, but it is also an affordable and equitable way to generate revenue for the state of Massachusetts.
 - Referred to Joint Committee on Revenue, no hearing yet