



CHIP LEGISLATIVE, BUDGET & REGULATORY ACTION AGENDA 2021-2022

Update – 9/1/22

Social and Economic Priorities:



SAPHE 2.0 Bill (H.2329): 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.

[8/25/22 update: The FY2023 budget included \$15 million in funding for SAPHE grants to local and regional public health (line item 4512-2022). The SAPHE 2.0 legislation (H. 5104) was enacted by the legislature but then returned by the Governor unsigned on 8/11/22, with a recommended amendment requested by the Governor. The Governor's explanation for returning the bill and the text of the proposed amendment can be found in [H. 5179](#). The amendment proposes two main changes. One would make the grant program an optional program for cities and towns to opt into. The other change would require cities and towns to maintain their level of local public health spending as a condition for receiving support. The legislature has until the end of the year to either adopt the Governor's amendment or something different, and send the bill back to the Governor. At that point, the Governor can either sign or veto the revised bill.]



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.

[8/25/22 update: Both bills were approved by the Committee on Children, Families, and Persons with Disabilities, and were each referred to their respective branch's Ways and Means Committee, where they remain. However, the Senate-passed version of comprehensive Economic Development legislation (S. 3030) included a \$1 million appropriation (line item 4403-2001) for a pilot cliff-effect program similar to the program in the bill. The program was not included in the House version. The Senate and House bills remained in a conference committee as the formal sessions ended, and there are efforts to have the legislature reconvene to consider the bill. It would be up to the Conference Committee to include or exclude the provision in the final bill.]



Create Office of Rural Policy for Massachusetts (H.503, S.265). This bill supports a recommendation of the state's new Rural Policy Plan.

[8/25/22 update: Both bills were approved by the Committee on Economic Development and Emerging Technologies and the Rules Committee, and are pending in their respective branches' Ways and Means Committee.]



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.

[8/25/22 update: Both bills were approved by the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing, and are pending in the House Ways and Means Committee. However, the legislation was included in the FY 2023 budget and signed into law. Information on the common application is available [here](#).]



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.

[8/25/22 update: The bill was referred by the Committee to a study order and is dead for the session.]



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.

[8/25/22 update: The bill was referred by the Committee to a study order and is dead for the session.]



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.

[8/25/22 update: The bill was reported out unfavorably by the Judiciary Committee and is dead for the session.]

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.

[8/25/22 update: The bills were approved by the Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities and the Committee on Health Care Financing and is pending in the Senate Ways and Means Committee (note: the House bill is H.250). However, the Senate-passed version of comprehensive Economic Development legislation (S. 3030) included a permanent authorization and Trust Fund for the HIP program, as section 7 of the bill. It is not included in the House version. The Senate and House bills remained in a conference committee as the formal sessions ended, and there are efforts to have the legislature reconvene to consider the bill. It would be up to the Conference Committee to include or exclude the provision in the final bill.]



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.

[8/25/22 update: The bill was referred by the Committee to a study order and is dead for the session.]



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.

[8/25/22 update: The bill (along with its companion House bill, H. 2298) was approved by the Public Health Committee and remains in the Health Care Financing Committee.]



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). <https://www.greenfuturenowma.org/legislation>

[8/25/22 update: The bill was heard by the Committee and no further action has occurred.]

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.

[8/25/22 update: S. 1287 was approved by the Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use and Recovery and is pending in the Health Care Financing Committee. Also, the legislature passed a comprehensive mental health legislation at the end of the session, called the "Mental Health ABC Act." The bill was signed by the Governor. The bill does not appear to include provisions for peer support and recovery coach expansions. A summary of the major provisions of the bill is here: <https://senatorjocomerford.org/addressing-barriers-to-care-whats-in-the-legislatures-final-mental-health-bill/>]



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. *[8/25/22 update: The Senate bill was referred to a study by the Mental Health, Substance Use and Recovery Committee. The House bill was approved by the Financial Services Committee and is pending in the Health Care Financing Committee.]*

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

[8/25/22 update: No action was taken on the bill following its hearing in the Transportation Committee.]



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.

[8/25/22 update: Not clear on progress on these, as they were not happening in the Legislature.]



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.

[8/25/22 update: The bill was approved by the Housing Committee and remains pending in the House Ways and Means Committee.]



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.

[8/25/22 update: The Senate bill was reported unfavorably, and the House bill was not acted on by the Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy.]



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.

[8/25/22 update: The bill was approved by the House Committee and is pending in the Senate Ways and Means Committee.]



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.

[8/25/22 update: These bills (numbered H. 1428 and S. 898) were reported favorably by the Housing Committee and are pending in the Senate Ways and Means Committee.]



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.

[8/25/22 update: Both bills remain pending in the Revenue Committee.]