



Kenneth I. Gordon

Massachusetts State Representative
21st Middlesex District

Gordon Joins Legislature to Pass Fiscal Year 2024 Budget
\$56.2B budget agreement provides for historic levels of investment in education, housing, regional transportation, and health care

(BOSTON–8/1/23) On Monday, the Legislature enacted a \$56.2 billion budget for Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24). The FY24 budget sent to Governor Healey provides for historic levels of investment in education, housing, regional transportation, health care, workforce development, and more, as part of a broad strategy to grow our state’s economy and make Massachusetts more affordable, inclusive, and competitive.

“This budget proposal not only represents the Commonwealth’s current needs, but paves the way for programs and investments that will ensure a more equitable and competitive future,” **said Representative Ken Gordon (D-Bedford)**. “I’m particularly proud that this budget provides universal access to school meals and significant new funding for early education and childcare that will enable our children to thrive in the years to come. I am thankful to Speaker Mariano, Senate President Spilka, and all of my colleagues for their hard work to craft this responsible and impactful budget.”

Burlington Investments

- **Burlington Chapter 70 School Aid:** \$9,355,284;
- **Burlington Unrestricted Local Government Aid (UGGA):** \$3,130,714;
- **\$100,000** for the town of Burlington to make technology upgrades related to hybrid town and board meetings;
- **\$50,000** to be shared by towns of Burlington and Bedford to support PFAS mitigation
- **\$50,000** to Food Link, Inc. to address food insecurity in Arlington, Billerica, Burlington, Lexington, and Woburn.

Bedford Investments

- **Bedford Chapter 70 School Aid:** \$6,020,493;
- **Bedford Unrestricted Local Government Aid (UGGA):** \$1,372,295;
- **\$1.45 million** for the education of students of families living on military bases such as Hanscom AFB, from which Bedford’s share will be allocated;
- **\$100,000** for the town of Bedford to purchase accessible playground equipment; and
- **\$50,000** to be shared by towns of Burlington and Bedford to support PFAS mitigation

Policy Highlights

Paid Family and Medical Leave Policy

Representative Gordon also secured amendments that would make significant policy changes benefiting Massachusetts residents. The budget included his amendment that will clarify the intent of the Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) statute to ensure that employees can supplement their PFML benefits with other unused benefit time up to 100% wage replacement. This clarification to the law will strengthen the program and allow families to care for a new child or loved one or take time with them during severe injury or illness, without jeopardizing their financial security.

School Meals for All

The budget allocates **\$171.5 million** to require public schools to provide universal school meals to all students free of charge, making this pandemic era program permanent. This step makes Massachusetts the seventh state in the country to make the program permanent. The budget also includes two studies to examine school meal waste avoidance and nutrition standards under the program.

No Cost Calls

The FY24 budget removes barriers to communication services for persons who are incarcerated and their loved ones. Under this provision, the Department of Correction (DOC) and sheriffs must provide phone calls at no cost to persons receiving and initiating phone calls, without a cap on the number of minutes or calls. As part of this initiative, DOC and sheriffs must maximize purchasing power and seek to consolidate voice communication services contracts.

Funding Highlights

Education: Early Education and Care, K-12 and Higher Education

The FY24 budget supports students across the full spectrum of the Commonwealth's education system, from Massachusetts' youngest learners to adults re-entering higher education. The budget report delivers historic levels of investment in education, including:

- **\$6.59 billion** in Chapter 70 funding, an increase of \$604 million over FY 2023, as well as doubling minimum Chapter 70 aid from \$30 to \$60 per pupil.
- **\$1.5 billion** investment in early education and care—the largest-ever annual appropriation for early education and care in Massachusetts history.
- **\$475 million** for the Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) grants; FY24 is the first fiscal year in which the annual state budget includes a full year of funding for C3 grants, signaling a historic commitment to maintain this crucial lifeline for our early education and care sector.
- **\$504.5 million** for the special education (SPED) circuit breaker.
- **\$50 million** to accelerate and build capacity to support free community college across all campuses by fall of 2024, including \$38 million for free community college programs starting in the fall of 2023 for students aged 25 or older, as well as for students pursuing degrees in nursing to address a critical workforce need

The FY24 budget also provides access to in-state tuition for students without a documented immigration status that went to a Massachusetts high school for at least three years or obtained a GED in the state.

Transportation

- **\$181 million** for MBTA capital projects.
- **\$100 million** in supplemental aid for roads and bridges, half of which will be expended consistent with the Chapter 90 program, with the other half to be spent with a focus on the total mileage of participating municipalities.
- **\$90 million** for regional transit funding and grants to be used exclusively to support the work of Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs), more than doubling the total funding for RTAs to \$184 million.
- **\$20 million** to address ongoing safety concerns at the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) that have been identified by the Federal Transit Administration's Safety Management Inspection.
- **\$5.7 million** for water transportation, which will cover one-time expenses for a pilot program covering operational assistance for ferry services.

Health, Mental Health and Family Care

Investments in the FY24 budget allow more than 2 million people to receive affordable, accessible, and comprehensive health care services. Health care investments include:

- **\$19.81 billion** for MassHealth, representing the largest investment made in the state budget.
- **\$213.3 million** for a complete range of substance use disorder treatment and intervention services.

- **\$119.8 million** for children’s mental health services.
- **\$2 million** for grants for improvements in reproductive health access, infrastructure, and safety. **\$1 million** for the development, expansion and operation of freestanding birth centers and support for community-based maternal health services.

The FY24 budget also requires a state employer to offer a new state employee Group Insurance Commission health insurance coverage effective as of the employee's start date if the employee starts work at the beginning of the month or no later than the first day of the first full month of their employment.

Housing

The FY24 budget makes a historic \$1.05 billion investment in housing, dedicating resources to programs that support housing stability, residential assistance, and assistance to those experiencing homelessness.

The budget prioritizes relief for families and individuals who continue to face challenges brought on by the pandemic and financial insecurity, including **\$324 million** for Emergency Assistance family shelters and \$190 million for Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT), which provides rental assistance up to \$7,000 per household.

In addition to these substantial investments, the FY24 budget makes permanent a pandemic-era eviction protection for renters. Under the program, a judge cannot execute an eviction before an emergency rental assistance application has been approved or denied.

Expanding and Protecting Economic Opportunities

The budget includes a record investment in the annual child’s clothing allowance, providing \$450 per child for eligible families to buy clothes for the upcoming school year.

Economic opportunity investments include:

- **\$444.7 million** for Transitional Assistance to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) and **\$204.4 million** for Emergency Aid to Elderly, Disabled and Children (EAEDC) to continue efforts to lift families out of ‘deep poverty’—defined as is income below half the federal poverty level—and to provide the necessary support as caseloads increase.
- **\$20 million** for the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund to connect unemployed and under-employed workers with higher paying jobs.
- **\$15.4 million** for Career Technical Institutes to increase our skilled worker population and provide residents access to career technical training opportunities.
- **\$5.9 million** for the Innovation Pathways program to continue to connect students to training and post-secondary opportunities in STEM fields.

Having passed the House of Representatives and the Senate, the FY24 budget now moves to the Governor’s desk for her consideration.

###