

FY2020 SENATE BUDGET AMENDMENT PRIORITIES

May 13, 2019

Dear Senator:

We ask for your support for these amendments to adequately fund programs that support healthy communities and promote health equity for all Massachusetts residents in the FY20 budget.

TOP PRIORITIES

- **Amendment #1136 – Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) Funding, by Sen. Chandler.** *Fund 1595-6370 at \$90.5m in base funding (increase over FY19).* This amendment will fully fund RTAs at \$90.5m in base funding, as recommended by the Task Force on RTA Performance and Funding. The amendment also provides \$4.5m in performance-based grant funding distributed by MassDOT as an incentive to RTAs without reducing stable base funding. RTAs, serving 262 communities outside of Greater Boston, connect residents, especially low-income residents and seniors, to medical care, substance use treatment, groceries, jobs, education and other drivers of good health outcomes. *History – FY20 SWM: \$86m in base funding + \$4.5m in discretionary funding, FY20 House: \$87m in base funding, FY20 H1: \$82m in base funding + 4m in discretionary funding, FY19: \$82m in base funding + \$6m in discretionary funding, FY16: \$82m in base funding.*
- **Amendment #845 – Get the Lead Out Program, by Sen. Cyr and Sen. DiZoglio.** *Fund 7004-1966 at \$5m.* This amendment will recapitalize the Get the Lead Out Program, which provides low- and no-cost loans to income eligible families to remediate lead paint hazards. Without recapitalization, fund will run out of money in mid-2020. Lead exposure in young children can cause severe and irreversible health effects, including impairment of cognitive and physical development, and has been correlated with future school performance, behavioral difficulties, and learning problems. Children living in low income communities are 3x more likely to be lead poisoned than those living in high income communities. Children of color are 1.5x more likely, and black children 2.5x more likely, than their white peers to suffer from lead poisoning. Past and present discrimination in housing opportunity, cost, and quality directly contribute to these inequities. Lead paint in the home is an especially serious threat to young children in MA. 71% of the housing in MA was built before 1978, and only about 10% of these homes have been reported to be de-leaded, leaving more than 1.8 million homes likely containing lead hazards.

ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES

- **Amendment #544 - Healthy Incentives Program, by Sen. Gobi.** *Fund 4400-1004 at \$8.5m (increase over FY19).* This amendment will meet increasing program demand by allowing it to operate year-round, allow for more participants, and fill geographic gaps in the program. HIP increases healthy food access by providing a one-for-one match, adding money back onto a SNAP recipient's EBT card when they use it to purchase fresh fruits or vegetables at a participating farm stand, farmers market, CSA, or mobile market. SNAP sales at farm retailers increased by 600% - to \$8.3m - from 2016-2017 thanks to HIP. *History – FY20 SWM: \$6.5m; FY20 House: \$4.5m, FY20 H1: \$5.3m, FY19: \$6.35m, FY18: \$1.35m.*
- **Amendment #434 – Closing the SNAP Gap Pilot, by Sen. DiDomenico.** *Update language in 4000-0300 (modified from FY19).* This amendment directs EOHHS to establish a pilot to allow residents to apply for SNAP (food assistance) automatically when applying for or renewing MassHealth or Medicare Savings Program benefits. The amendment would also task the

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Administration with identifying the costs of implementing this initiative. The “SNAP Gap” refers to the 740K+ people who are enrolled in MassHealth and likely eligible for SNAP, but who aren’t receiving benefits. *History – FY20 SWM: not included; FY20 House: not included; FY20 H1: not included, FY19: related language included.*

- **Amendment #715 – Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP), by Sen. Crighton.** *Fund 7004-9024 at \$124m (increase over FY19).* This amendment will provide additional funding to increase the stock of affordable housing and produce new vouchers. The number of households experiencing housing instability and homelessness persists as MA remains one of the most expensive states in the nation. Access to housing vouchers has been shown to increase stability and improve health outcomes for adults and kids. *History – FY20 SWM: \$104m; FY20 House: \$110m, FY20 H1: \$100m, FY19: \$100m, FY18: \$92.7m.*

We thank you for your partnership to support a healthy and equitable Commonwealth. For more information, please contact Maddie Ribble at 617-697-2107 or mribble@mapublichealth.org.

Sincerely,



Carlene Pavlos
Executive Director



Maddie Ribble
Director of Public Policy