



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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## **Chair, Joint Committee on Housing**

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& Energy

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## **Senator Eldridge Votes to Pass Fiscal Year 2015 Budget**

*Boosts spending to cities and towns, increases support for housing, human services and environment*

BOSTON – Senator Jamie Eldridge (D- Acton) announced that the Massachusetts Senate completed its Fiscal Year 2015 budget debate on Thursday evening, May 22nd, passing a balanced \$36.2 billion budget after months of budget meetings, advocacy, and rallies at the State House.

“This year marks a continued trend of the Senate passing significant new increases in key budget areas, including local aid, housing, the environment, human services and education, because of the improving economy and the 2013 tax package,” said Senator Jamie Eldridge. “I’m pleased that the priorities that I fought for have been included in this budget, including for the less fortunate, seniors, the disabled, and the unemployed.”

Highlights of the budget include:

- Increasing Chapter 70 state education aid to public schools by \$99.5 million;
- \$70.3 million for Regional School Transportation, to reimburse 90% of the full amount expended for transportation of any participating school district;
- \$260 million to fully fund the Special Education Circuit breaker for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row;
- \$280,000 for regional bonus aid for new regional school districts, which will benefit Ayer-Shirley Regional High School and the Acton-Boxborough school district;
- \$10 million from the FY14 end-of-year surplus to fund the Community Preservation Fund state match for CPA communities;

- \$2.2 million for MCI Prison Mitigation, for host communities of correctional facilities;
- \$15 million for the Massachusetts Emergency Food Program (MEFAP);
- \$12 million for the Massachusetts Cultural Council;
- \$8 million for a Human Service Salary Reserve, to adjust the wages of low-paid, private human service providers who contract with state agencies;
- \$17.5 million to expand access to early education for low income families;
- \$18 million to support new substance abuse prevention and treatment programs.

Senator Jamie Eldridge also championed several amendments that passed in the Senate budget, including:

- A Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Storm water Management amendment that would increase funding by \$100,000;
- An Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP) amendment that would increase funding by \$200,000, adding rental vouchers for low-income individuals with disabilities under 60 years old;
- A Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) amendment that would enable DHCD to issue new mobile MRVP vouchers and facilitate and streamline the inclusion of MRVP program participants in a new online electronic statewide waiting list;
- A New Lease Program for Homeless Families amendment for \$100,000 that would secure funding for the third year of a pilot program called New Lease, which is the first program to adopt a homeless family preference in private housing;
- A Healthy Relationships Grant Program amendment that would create a competitive grant program of \$150,000 in public schools from grades 5 through 12 that will promote healthy relationships and address teen dating violence.

The budget will now go to a Conference Committee for reconciliation with the budget passed by the House of Representatives last month.