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Massachusetts budget officials announce \$1.9 Billion FY 2022 surplus following tax refunds

Following the Department of Revenue's release of June 2022 collections earlier today, the Executive Office for Administration and Finance announced that the Commonwealth will end Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) with a \$1.9 billion surplus, according to preliminary figures. This surplus accounts for \$3 billion in automatic tax refunds required under Chapter 62F of the Massachusetts General Laws, \$1.4 billion in statutory transfers, including capital gains transfers to the Stabilization Fund, and approximately \$800 million in supplemental funding appropriated in FY22.

As announced by the Department of Revenue, in total, \$41.105 billion was collected in FY22, representing overall revenue growth of approximately 20.5% above Fiscal Year 2021. This total is \$6.7 billion above the total taxes assumed at the time the FY22 budget was enacted.

The FY22 surplus reflects significantly stronger-than-expected revenue collections throughout the fiscal year. In both January and May 2022, the Administration revised FY22 tax benchmarks upward in response to the high collections, increasing the revenue forecast by a cumulative \$3.3 billion. Collections nonetheless exceeded the revised benchmarks by \$3.5 billion by the end of the fiscal year.

Of FY22 tax collections, per state law, a total of \$1.4 billion in excess capital gains and sales tax revenue was

transferred to the MBTA, the School Building Authority, and budget reserves including the Stabilization Fund. Made up of \$1.1 billion in budgeted excess capital gains tax transfers and \$1.2 billion in further excess capital gains revenue, a total of \$2.3 billion was deposited into the Stabilization Fund during FY22, bringing its balance to a historic \$6.9 billion. Another approximately \$800 million was appropriated by the Legislature in two supplemental budgets, passed in February and April.

After accounting for the above, the approximately \$3 billion in tax refunds to Commonwealth taxpayers as required under c.62F, and other year-end closing activities, the Commonwealth still closes FY22 with a preliminary surplus of \$1.9 billion.

This \$1.9 billion surplus is in addition to approximately \$2.3 billion in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Fiscal Recovery Funds that remain unallocated and available for appropriation.

Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker signs Fiscal Year 2023 budget

Governor Charlie Baker today signed the Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) budget, a \$52.7 billion spending plan that supports the Commonwealth's communities, families, businesses, and workers. The budget fully funds the continued implementation of the Student Opportunity Act, while expanding proven programs and making record investments in early education and childcare, housing and homeownership, college financial aid, economic and workforce development, behavioral health care and local aid.

The FY23 budget is in balance, does not rely on one-time revenue sources, and does not raise any new taxes or fees; rather, it incorporates \$315 million to support permanent tax reductions that are expected to be enacted through separate legislation pending in the Legislature. Several of the expected tax measures were first proposed in the Administration's FY23 budget plan filed in January, including an increase to the rental deduction cap, expansions of the dependent care and senior circuit breaker tax credits, and estate tax reforms.

"With the Commonwealth in a historically strong fiscal position, the FY23 budget supports tax relief for hundreds of thousands of taxpayers, while making record investments in education and local aid," said Governor Charlie Baker. "Since coming into office, our Administration has worked closely with the Legislature to ensure the budget is structurally sound and protected from unpredictable economic fluctuations, and I am pleased to sign another budget that maintains this commitment while making investments help Massachusetts' families and communities grow and thrive."

"The FY23 budget maintains our Administration's strong support for the Commonwealth's cities and towns and expands services in acute areas of need, like housing stability, education and childcare access, workforce development, transportation, substance addiction treatment and behavioral health care," said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito. "This funding will further our work to encourage the economic growth of our communities, promote equitable access to opportunity and support the health and wellbeing of all residents."

The FY23 budget incorporates an upgraded \$39.576 billion base tax revenue forecast, an increase of \$2.66 billion above the total FY23 consensus tax projection set in January. This revenue supports a total of \$52.7 billion in gross spending, excluding the Medical Assistance Trust Fund transfer, which reflects approximately 9.3% growth in appropriations over

Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22).

As enacted, the budget anticipates a sizable deposit into the Stabilization Fund of nearly \$1.5 billion, which would increase the balance of the Fund from an already historic high of \$6.9 billion to \$8.4 billion. This would represent a \$7.3 billion increase in the balance of the Stabilization Fund since the Baker-Polito Administration came into office in 2015 – an achievement made possible by the Administration and Legislature’s close collaboration and commitment to responsible management of the Commonwealth’s finances.

“Fiscal responsibility has been a cornerstone of the Baker-Polito Administration, and we are proud of the work that has been done over the last seven years to bring the budget into structural balance and build up reserves, which will protect the Commonwealth from economic volatility and ensure the continuity of vital government services in the long-term,” said Administration and Finance Secretary Michael J. Heffernan. “We thank our colleagues in the Legislature for their partnership in developing this impactful spending plan that sustains critical supports for the Commonwealth’s communities, families, and workers.”

The revenue upgrade incorporated into the budget also affords a number of substantial one-time transfers and reserves in FY23, including: a \$266 M reserve to support MBTA safety and workforce initiatives; a \$175 million transfer to a new trust fund dedicated to supporting high-quality early education and care; a \$150 million transfer to the Student Opportunity Act Investment Fund; \$100 million for a supplemental transfer to the Commonwealth’s Pension Liability Fund; and \$100 million for a transfer to the State Retiree Benefits Trust Fund.

Investing in Massachusetts’ Future

The FY23 budget makes record investments in the Massachusetts education system across all levels, from childcare to higher education. It continues to fully fund the implementation of

the Student Opportunity Act with a \$5.998 billion annual Chapter 70 investment, along with a \$67.7 million increase over FY22 for special education circuit breaker reimbursement for cities and towns and a \$89.2 million increase in charter school reimbursement funding. The Governor also signed a new one-time investment of \$110 million that will support a pilot free school meal program for students in K-12 schools.

In addition to the \$175 million trust fund transfer to support high-quality early education and care, the FY23 budget provides a total of \$1.184 billion for the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC). Notably, this includes \$250 million for grants to help stabilize early education and childcare providers through the pandemic recovery period, \$60 million for childcare provider rate increases and funding to support the full implementation of a more equitable parent fee scale that will result in virtually all subsidized families paying a fee that is 7% of their income or less in FY23.

The FY23 budget also provides \$1.61 billion for college affordability, degree completion, and workforce readiness. This funding supports more than \$190 million in support for financial aid, which includes an expansion of the MASSGrant Plus program that will enable all low-income, in-state undergraduate students to attend public higher education without incurring debt for mandatory tuition and mandatory fees. The budget also includes over \$30 million to scale up college and career pathway programs for high school students with a focus on equity and recruitment of high-need student populations.

The budget furthers supports job readiness and efforts to connect students and workers to high-demand career pathways with increased funding for programs within the Executive Office for Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD). It includes \$28.5 million for the YouthWorks Summer Jobs program, \$23.9 million in total funding for the Career Technical Initiative, \$17 million for the Workforce Competitiveness

Trust Fund, and \$15 million for MassHire one-stop career centers.

As Massachusetts' economic recovery continues, the budget supports the Baker-Polito Administration's focus on promoting equitable growth and opportunity for communities and businesses across the Commonwealth. The budget provides \$32.2 million for the Small Business Technical Assistance Grant Program, which supports diverse entrepreneurs and small businesses, along with \$20 million for the Community Empowerment and Reinvestment Grant program, \$17.2 million for local economic development projects, and \$10.7 million to support Massachusetts tourism and hospitality.

The FY23 budget builds on the Administration's efforts to promote equality and opportunity for communities of color with more than \$50 million across the budget supporting targeted programs and initiatives aligned with the recommendations of the Governor's Black Advisory Commission (BAC) and Latino Advisory Commission (LAC). The budget also fully funds the Supplier Diversity Office (SDO), which promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion in state contracting and ensures accountability and compliance with diversity goals.

To continue supporting local communities throughout Massachusetts, the FY23 budget increases the Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA) investment by \$63.1 million above FY22, for a total of \$1.231 billion. A further \$20.7 million in funding is provided for Community Compact-related programs including best practices and regionalization and efficiency grants.

Recognizing the challenges of the housing market, particularly in the aftermath of COVID-19, the FY23 budget makes investments to create long-lasting improvements in housing stability and access to homeownership. Building on the Eviction Diversion Initiative (EDI), the budget implements major reforms and significantly increases funding for rental

assistance, re-housing benefits and housing vouchers. Along with eligibility expansions that will multiply the number of households served and increase benefits, the budget invests a historic \$150 million in Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT), an increase of \$128 million (582%) above FY22, and it provides \$59.4 million for HomeBASE, a 129% increase vs. FY22. It also supports \$110 million for homeless individual shelters, a 90% increase above FY22, and \$154.3 million for Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP), which will support enhanced benefits and reforms that will give families more housing choice and flexibility.

The budget sustains support for core health care programs and makes investments to expand services for the most vulnerable, while improving access to health care for all residents. Within the \$19.480 billion gross / \$7.301 billion net MassHealth budget, \$115 million will fund nursing facility staffing rate increases and supplemental payments. The MassHealth budget also incorporates a gross increase of \$73.2 million to expand the Medicare Savings Program, which will reduce out-of-pocket health care spending and prescription drug costs for approximately 65,000 low-income seniors and disabled individuals.

The MassHealth budget includes \$115 million to support the expansion of outpatient and urgent behavioral health services; further FY23 investments in behavioral health care include \$20 million for a clinical behavioral health worker loan forgiveness program and a \$20 million for a trust dedicated to supporting the expansion of access to and utilization of behavioral health services.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated substance addiction issues across Massachusetts, and the FY23 budget continues to ramp up funding to combat this public health crisis. The budget includes \$597.2 million in total funding for a wide range of harm reduction, treatment, and recovery programs that support individuals struggling with substance addiction and programs

that work to prevent substance addiction through education, prescription monitoring, and more.

The budget also continues efforts to ensure survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence have access to necessary services and supports, a priority of the Baker-Polito Administration. \$132 million in total FY23 funding is allocated for services to prevent and treat sexual assault and domestic violence, a 104% increase in funding since FY15.

Outside Sections and Earmarks

As part of the budget-signing, Governor Baker vetoed \$475,000 in gross spending, signed 153 outside sections, and returned 41 to the Legislature with proposed amendments.

Notable outside sections returned with amendment include:

- Adding the most important provisions from the Administration's dangerousness bill into the section that would provide free phone calls to inmates.
- Amending an outside section relating to the Children and Family Legal Representation Trust Fund to require that money in the fund may only be spent on expanded guardian ad litem appointments in care and protection cases
- Requiring the Health Connector to study implementation steps and costs of a Connector Care pilot program

FY23 Budget Highlights

K-12 Education

Fully funds the implementation of the landmark Student Opportunity Act, adding a total of \$651.8 million in new spending above FY22:

- \$494.9 million increase in Chapter 70 funding, including an increase in minimum per-pupil aid from \$30 to \$60, for a total Chapter 70 investment of \$5.998 billion
- \$67.7 million increase for special education circuit breaker reimbursement for local cities and towns

- \$89.2 million in additional funding for charter school reimbursement
- \$150 million for a one-time transfer to the Student Opportunity Act investment trust fund
- \$110 million for a pilot free school meal program for students in K-12 schools
- Over \$30 million to scale up college and career pathways
- \$15 million for scholarships and loan forgiveness programs for public school teachers

Early Education and Childcare

- \$1.184 billion for Early Education and Care (EEC), including:
 - \$250 million to support continued stabilization of childcare facilities
 - \$60 million for center-based childcare provider rate increases
 - In addition to the above funding, a one-time \$175 million transfer to a new trust fund dedicated to supporting high-quality early education and care.

Higher Education

\$1.61 billion for the Department of Higher Education, University of Massachusetts, and state universities and community colleges, including:

- More than \$190 million to support financial aid, including \$18 million to support an expansion of the MASSGrant Plus program that will enable all low-income, in-state undergraduate students to attend public higher education without incurring debt for mandatory tuition and mandatory fees and \$15 million for financial aid increases at the University of Massachusetts
- \$22 million in financial aid for Massachusetts students attending private institutions
- \$8.8 million for foster care financial aid and fee waiver programs to maintain support for over 1,400 students attending

private and public campuses who are currently or were previously in DCF custody and care, or who have been adopted through DCF

Supporting Local Government

- Total investment of \$1.231 billion in Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA) for local cities and towns
- \$20.7 million for Community Compact related programs including best practices and regionalization and efficiency grants, an increase of 63% above FY22, including \$5 million for the Public Safety Staffing Grant Program and \$3 million for district local technical assistance

Housing and Homelessness

\$884.6 million for the Department of Housing and Community Development, a \$300.5 million (51%) increase above FY22, which includes:

- \$219.4 million for the Emergency Assistance family shelter system
- \$154.3 million for MRVP to support more than 10,000 vouchers in FY23
- \$150 million for Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT), an increase of \$128 million above FY22
- \$110 million for Homeless Individual Shelters and \$5 million to continue an innovative model to create new housing opportunities with wraparound services for chronically homeless individuals
- \$92 million in funding for Local Housing Authorities
- \$59.4 million for HomeBASE Household Assistance
- \$12.5 million for a collaborative program through which the Department of Mental Health provides mental health services and DHCD provides rental assistance

Economic Development

- \$32.2 million for the Small Business Technical Assistance Grant Program for entrepreneurs and small businesses,

especially those owned by women, immigrants, veterans, and people of color

- \$20 million for the Community Empowerment and Reinvestment Grant program to support development in socially and economically disadvantaged communities
- \$10.7 million to support the Massachusetts tourism and hospitality sector

Labor and Workforce Development

- \$28.5 million for the YouthWorks Summer Jobs Program to subsidize summer job opportunities and provide soft job skills education for youths
- \$23.9 million in total funding for Career Technical Institutes, which provide pathways to high-demand vocational trade careers, including plumbing, HVAC, manufacturing, and robotics
- \$15 million for MassHire one-stop career centers
- \$600,000 for a new appropriation to expand research and analytics capabilities to enhance data-driven workforce development strategies

Health and Human Services

- \$230 million for Chapter 257 human service provider funding
 - \$115 million to expand outpatient and urgent behavioral health services at MassHealth, plus an additional \$20 million at the Department of Mental Health for clinical behavioral health worker loan forgiveness
 - \$73.2 million gross to expand the Medicare Savings Program, reducing out-of-pocket health care spending and drug costs for approximately 65,000 low-income older adults and disabled individuals
 - \$720.4 million for the Executive Office of Elder Affairs, including \$24.9 million for grants to Local Councils on Aging,
 - \$7.9 million for supportive senior housing, and \$2.5 million for geriatric mental health services
- Fully funds the Turning 22 program at the Department of

Development Services and other agencies

- \$1.2 billion for the Department of Children and Families (DCF), an increase of \$368.7 million (45%) since 2015, including
 - \$13.4 million to support families that are fostering children in DCF care and to encourage recruitment of new foster families
- \$174.2 million in funding for Veterans' Services and the Chelsea and Holyoke Soldiers' Homes, which includes a \$13.2 million (37%) increase above FY22 for the Chelsea Soldiers' Home to support the Fall 2022 opening of a new 154-bed state-of-the-art Community Living Center
- \$15 million in grants to local health departments to support municipalities' capacity to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic

Substance Addiction Prevention and Treatment

- \$597.2 million for substance addiction prevention and treatment services across the budget, an increase of \$478 million since FY15

Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence

- \$132 million, a 104% increase since FY15, in support of services to prevent and treat victims of sexual assault and domestic violence, including \$1.5 million in new investments to combat human trafficking

Promoting Equality and Opportunity

- More than \$50 million supporting the recommendations of the Black Advisory Commission (BAC) and the Latino Advisory Commission (LAC)

Transportation

- \$1.55 billion in total budget transfers for the MBTA
- \$457 million for the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), including \$95 million for snow and ice operations and \$3.4 million to support implementation of

new funds provided through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

- \$266 million for a reserve to support MBTA safety improvements and workforce initiatives
- \$96.5 million for Regional Transit Authorities
- \$11.6 million for the Merit Rating Board

Energy and the Environment

- \$134 million for the Department of Conservation and Recreation, including funding for the Summer Nights program and the Swim Safe Massachusetts program to enhance and promote water safety
- • \$45.4 million for Environmental Protection Administration
- \$30.6 million for the Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program
- \$5.4 million for climate change and adaptation preparedness

Criminal Justice and Public Safety

- \$445.1 million for the State police public safety and crime lab operations, including funding to support the 87th and 88th Massachusetts State Police Recruit Training Troops
- \$12.3 million in funding for the Shannon Grant program to fund anti-gang and youth violence prevention efforts
- \$10.4 million to fully fund tuition and fee waivers for National Guard members
- \$11.7 million for the Municipal Police Training Commission to implement bridge academies, expand training capacity, and annualize training requirements such as de-escalation and school resource officer trainings
- \$5.8 million to support the Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Commission and four other new commissions created in the Police Reform bill
- Eliminates all parole and probation fees, building upon the 2018 Criminal Justice Reform legislation which eliminated fees for parolees on supervision for less than a year

Securing and Modernizing Government IT

\$163.3 million for the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security to support:

- Management of Cyber Security Operations Center (SOC)
- Continued migration of applications and infrastructure to cloud, third-party on-premise, and Software as a Service (SaaS)
- Continuation of EOTSS customer engagement initiative to enhance IT and security service offerings across Commonwealth agencies
- IT strategy consulting services in support of priority state agency and cross-secretariat initiatives
- Business intelligence (BI) and data analytics support for state agencies
- Centralized software and IT contract compliance program

To view the FY23 budget, [click here](#).

**Massachusetts Median Home
Sale Price Zooms Past
\$600,000**

By Colin A. Young
State House News Service

For the first time, the median single-family home price in Massachusetts exceeded the \$600,000 mark last month and one housing market analyst says prices might not have hit their apex just yet.

The median sale price registered at \$610,000 in June, The

Warren Group reported Tuesday, up from a median of \$555,000 in June 2021 and \$440,000 in June 2020. The fierce competition for houses in the Bay State got even more fraught last month as inventory shrank – the number of sales last declined 11.5 percent from last June to 6,182 sales.

“Keep in mind that it was only 14 months ago when the median price of \$500,000 was exceeded for the first time. I doubt we’ve seen the end of it,” Tim Warren, CEO of The Warren Group, said. “Experts keep speculating that with the recent hike in interest rates that prices could plateau in the near future, but I’m not sure we’re at the tipping point just yet. Price increases are moderating this year, but they are far from flatlining. There are just so many buyers and not enough homes to go around. I expect prospective buyers to continue paying significant premiums in the coming months, even as it gets more expensive to borrow money.”

Halfway through 2022, there have been 24,553 single-family home sales in Massachusetts, down 10.5 percent from the first six months of 2021. At the same time, the year-to-date median single family home price has increased 10 percent to \$550,000 and is up almost 33 percent since June 2020, The Warren Group said.

Excepting Nantucket (\$2.195 million median) and Dukes County (\$1.2 million median), the most expensive Massachusetts county for single-family homes this year has been Middlesex County with a median sale price of \$750,000, followed by Suffolk County’s \$726,000 median price and Norfolk County’s median of \$700,000. The most affordable counties so far this year have been Hampden County (\$275,000 median), Franklin County (\$287,000 median) and Berkshire County (\$290,000).

The Blue Point Restaurant Starts a New Chapter in Acushnet

If you're a fan of the the Blue Point Restaurant on social media you may have noticed that their has been a flurry of activity recently. If you're a regular, you might have seen a couple of new faces at the bar or working in the kitchen. One of those individuals is Juan Gomez who is actually returning to his roots as the new chef/ co-owner of the Blue Point. Years ago, Juan got his start working in the kitchen along side longtime owner David Riccardi. After venturing off to chart his own path and culinary career, he's returning to a place that kickstarted his journey. For the past few years Juan has been the head chef at Knuckleheads, but when an opportunity presents itself you have to take a leap of faith. The other half of this dynamic team is Natasha Silva, who brings extensive restaurant experience of her own as a bartender and front of the house manager. Its her presence that you see on social media and her drive to reach and engage new fans of the amazing food that Juan will be creating.

The Blue Point is a unique opportunity, its both a hidden gem and a local favorite. Based on past interactions and a feature we did on Knuckleheads a few years back, we know the quality of the food that Juan puts out there. In speaking with David he's excited at the chance to remain on board in the kitchen while simultaneously passing the torch to a new generation that reveres the place and the customers as much as he does. One big change; David finally gets to enjoy a Sunday off for the first time in 30 odd years.

One thing that won't change is all the favorites you've come to expect on the regular menu. Prime rib, chicken Marsala, veal parm, they are not going ANYWHERE. Every day you can

expect to see new specials that might end up on the permanent menu. Popular additions include: Carne Espeto, clam cakes, Buffalo chicken dip, grilled swordfish and chicken Madeira! Is your mouth watering yet?



One big change is the hours, they will be staying open later and opening for lunch during the week on Wednesday and Thursdays. Check out these weekly specials: on Tuesday buy two pizzas and get one 1/2 price; and on Wednesday, all you can eat fish and chip every Wednesday, all day for \$14.00 (with the purchase of a beverage)

Here are their current hours of operation:

Tuesday- 4:00-8:30

•Wednesday-12:30-8:30

•Thursday- 12:30-8:30

•Friday and Saturday- 11:30-9:00

•Sunday-11:30-8:00

The history of The Blue Point is a fascinating one. The main dining room of the Blue Point Restaurant is an original Worcester Dining Car, built at the Worcester factory in the 1930's. It was delivered by rail to New Bedford and opened as The Diner Blue Point Restaurant Eat-At BarDeluxe in 1939. Many of the diner's customers worked at the nearby Wamsutta Mills. When the mills closed, so eventually did the diner. In the 1960's an Acushnet man purchased it and moved it to its present location.

The diner (now restaurant) has been owned and operated by David and Lysa Riccardi since 1989. Blue Point Restaurant chef/owner, David Riccardi, has over 30 years experience in American, Italian, and French cuisine. Now its starting a new chapter and Juan and Natasha will help write the next 30 years of the story.

Be sure to follow them on Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/Dr622021>

Check out their new Instagram:
<https://www.instagram.com/bluepointrestaurantma/>

And check out their updated
website:<https://bluepointrestaurantbp.com/>



Mayor Mitchell presents New Bedford's Fiscal Year 2023 \$471.5 million budget

Mayor Jon Mitchell presented his Fiscal Year 2023 City Budget to the New Bedford City Council on Wednesday, May 18, 2022.

Cautious, Conservative Spending Blueprint

Mayor Mitchell noted that the new City budget, the third developed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, reflects continuing impacts on City revenues and expenditures that

require a “cautious, conservative approach to budgeting.”

The Mayor also expressed cautious optimism about the City’s financial outlook, noting:

The City has been able to successfully manage the fiscal emergency of the past few years because of willingness to make tough decisions that are in the interest of the City’s long-term fiscal health. Working together with the City Council, the City has taken a surgical approach to expenditure reductions that has not jeopardized public safety or decimated essential services relied on by residents.

Federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding has provided the City with resources to support one-time costs and other key needs that otherwise could have drawn from the City budget or gone unfunded.

The local economy continues to hold its own. The City’s unemployment rate has fallen significantly from its highest point during the early days of the crisis and continues to decline. Unemployment now stands at 5%, having further declined from 6.6% in January. Similarly, single-family home prices are trending upward, and commercial real estate investment opportunities are drawing attention from developers.

New Inflationary Concerns

New to this year’s budget is the necessity to cover significant cost increases associated with sizeable inflationary trends in energy and materials. Gasoline, diesel fuel, electricity, and natural gas prices have all skyrocketed in the past six months, as the global economy is facing inflationary pressures, supply chain disruptions and geopolitical instability that bear directly on New Bedford.

Mandates Consuming Three Quarters of Budget

Unrelenting growth in non-discretionary, mandated items such as pension obligations, other post-employment benefits, and health insurance costs continue to crowd out available revenues for essential municipal services. Mandated portions of the budget now account for more than 75% of all spending in the General Fund Budget, including:

- Health insurance, pension, and other insurance programs will increase in total more than \$2.9 million, due to projected claims expenses and growing pension funding requirements.
- Funding for the School Department is projected to increase by \$22.6 million, or 11.9%, to comply with the Commonwealth's minimum Net School Spending requirements. This is one of the largest annual increases in memory.
- Funding for charter schools continues to consume an increasing share of City resources. The City's contribution to Charter School Sending Tuition has risen from \$22.8 million in FY22 to \$26.9 million in FY23. Charter school expenses have significantly reduced the funding available to address needs in New Bedford Public Schools.

Call for Council to Act on Employee Health Care

In his remarks, Mayor Mitchell noted how employee health insurance has become a substantial driver of cost increases in the budget, and as such, is a major contributor to the property tax burden on our residents.

Since 2012, employee health insurance costs have risen from \$35.2 million to \$45.7 million, or nearly \$1 million per year every year. The cost of employee health insurance will increase by 7% in FY23. Total spending on employee health care now accounts for more than 10% of the General Fund. And the return of inflation to the broader economy suggest that these trends will not let up anytime soon.

Mayor Mitchell used the occasion to again ask the City Council

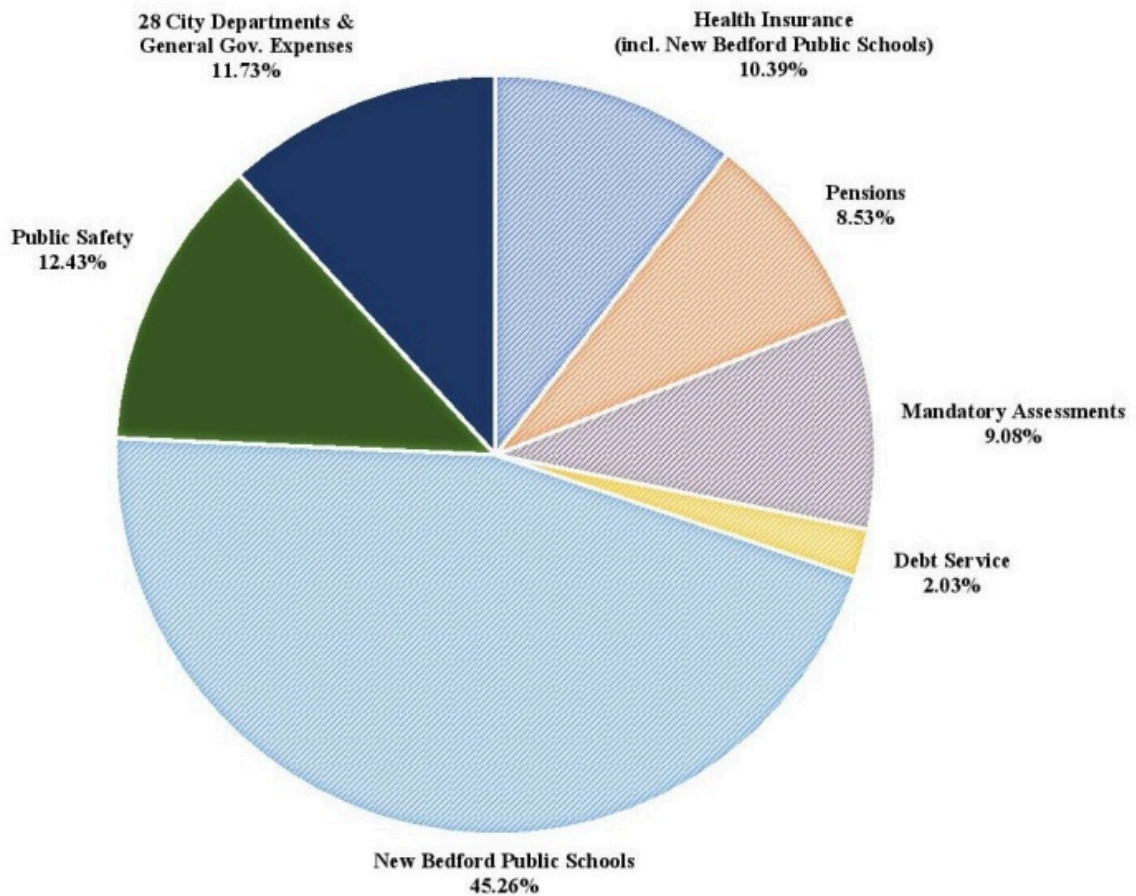
to implement a reform that virtually every other local government in southeastern Massachusetts has already implemented. Specifically, the Mayor called on the council to adopt Sections 21-23 of Chapter B of Massachusetts General Law. The adoption of these Sections equalizes the negotiating positions of the Administration and employee unions when negotiating health insurance benefits, by introducing a neutral arbiter.

A Commitment to Effective Partnership

Mayor Mitchell said the City will meet these challenges by relying on the cautious, deliberative approach and effective partnership with the City Council that long have served the City and residents well.

Read Mayor Mitchell's Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Address [here](#).

The FY2023 budget totals nearly \$471.5 million, of which the General Fund is the largest component, at about \$420.9 million.



Note: Cross-hatched sections indicate mandated expense categories.

FY 2023 General Fund Appropriations by Category \$420,859,991.

Massachusetts Baker-Polito administration files \$1.7 Billion Fiscal Year 2022 supplemental budget

The Baker-Polito Administration today will file a Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) supplemental budget that proposes investments in transportation, housing, environmental infrastructure, economic development, child care and education initiatives.

The legislation includes approximately \$1.7 billion in spending, supported by state tax revenues that exceed FY22 benchmarks through April by \$4.23 billion (14%). The current surplus also prompted the Administration to formally upgrade the FY22 tax benchmarks today, increasing the total fiscal year projection to \$37.666 billion.

Governor Charlie Baker made this announcement today in Salem at the site of what will be Massachusetts' second offshore wind port. The supplemental budget would direct \$100 million to ports in Salem, New Bedford and Somerset. These funds will support infrastructure to ensure Massachusetts becomes a global leader and a hub in the offshore wind industry.

"Unprecedented Fiscal Year 2022 revenues afford us this opportunity to make targeted investments in some of the Commonwealth's most pressing areas of need," said Governor Charlie Baker. "With rising prices due to inflation, ongoing supply chain issues, and other pandemic-related delays impacting both the time and cost it takes to complete projects, it is critically important that we act quickly to ensure that we are able to maximize the impact of these surplus tax dollars for the citizens of Massachusetts and expedite our response to critical needs."

"This spending plan proposes initiatives that will benefit residents and communities across the state, with a focus on expanding opportunities for disadvantaged populations," said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito. "The bill would increase the availability and quality of housing, build business opportunities in underserved communities, support transportation and environmental projects, and strengthen education and child care systems."

The legislation includes funding to support a variety of transportation and environmental infrastructure projects, including \$235 million for transportation projects, \$200 million for Cape Cod water and sewer initiatives, and \$100

million for ports in Salem, New Bedford, and Somerset. It also builds in funds necessary for the implementation of more than \$9.5 billion provided through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) over the next five years, as well as funding that will allow Massachusetts to access additional federal funding through matching grants. These funds complement investments proposed in the pending MassTRAC infrastructure bond bill and recently announced in the FY23-27 Capital Investment Plan.

Continuing the Administration's focus on addressing housing availability and building on the recently filed economic development legislation, An Act Investing in Future Opportunities for Resiliency, Workforce, and Revitalized Downtowns (FORWARD), this bill would provide \$310 million for housing development. It proposes \$200 million for workforce housing, \$100 million for public housing redevelopment in Boston, Cambridge, Salem, and Worcester, and \$10 million to increase permanent supportive housing for individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness.

A further \$180 million is allocated to targeted economic development initiatives, including \$80 million to support efforts to improve small businesses' options for purchasing commercial real estate, \$50 million to provide financial assistance to socially and economically disadvantaged developers, particularly those owned by women and people of color, who are seeking to undertake large housing construction projects and \$50 million to de-risk lending to small business owners in underserved markets where access to capital is otherwise limited.

"The unprecedented nature of Fiscal Year 2022 revenues will allow the Commonwealth to continue building our stabilization fund balance while making the critical investments proposed in this supplemental budget to fund infrastructure and spur economic development," said Secretary of Administration and Finance Michael J. Heffernan. "We look forward to working with the Legislature to deliver on the important investments laid

out in this responsible and thoughtful bill.”

“The Baker-Polito Administration continues to take a forward thinking approach to achieve the Commonwealth’s clean energy and environmental goals,” said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Beth Card. “The filing of this FY22 Supplement Budget will deliver important funds to several ports, which serve critical roles in advancing and supporting the Commonwealth’s offshore wind projects.”

A number of other initiatives are supported in the supplemental budget proposal, including:

- \$150 million for higher education campus physical infrastructure primarily at Mass College of Art and UMass Dartmouth;
- \$55 million for child care, including \$45 million for a new family child care home ownership and improvement program, which seeks to increase child care capacity while establishing financial security for family child care providers, and \$10 million for innovative and flexible models of child care delivery;
- \$55 million for nursing pathways programs;
- \$30 million for schools and colleges to modernize science and biotechnology labs; and
- \$28 million for other costs, including \$5 million for the USS Constitution park, \$10 million for miscellaneous legal settlements and judgments, and \$13 million for collective bargaining agreements authorized in an outside section.

The legislation also includes several policy proposals, including:

- A re-filed outside section that would update chapter 70, the school finance law, to establish early college and innovation pathways as an enrollment category in the Foundation Budget, to provide sustainable and predictable support for the growth of these pathways, which are demonstrating success in

expanding access to college and careers for underrepresented students;

- A section that would temporarily allow school districts to reserve some of their state chapter 70 funding for future years without facing state financial penalties, thereby helping them to spend time-limited federal funds;
 - A section that would permit youth to voluntarily access a broader range of department of youth services (DYS) supports beyond the current timeframe of 90 days after discharge from a DYS facility; and
 - A section that would continue a department of public health standing order that facilitates insurance coverage for over-the-counter COVID tests and treatments beyond the COVID-19 public health state of emergency.
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New Bedford's Mayor Mitchell announces community development funding in draft action plan

Proposed Projects Include Renovations to Boys & Girls Club, West Beach Bathhouse.

Mayor Jon Mitchell announced nearly \$6 million in proposed funding allocations detailed in the City's draft FY 2022 Housing & Community Development Action Plan, which is open for public comment.

Proposed allocations include \$480,000 for building renovations at the Greater New Bedford Boys & Girls Club and \$850,000 in improvements to the West Beach Bathhouse, including handicap

accessibility. Additional proposals in the plan include nearly \$1.9 million for home investment partnerships, such as the Rental Housing and Neighborhoods First programs.

The draft Action Plan is subject to New Bedford City Council approval and proposes allocations of funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), provided to support local housing and community development needs. Funds also include existing and anticipated income from City programs, and are allocated through three channels: Community Block Development Grants (CDBG); the HOME Investment Partnership program (HOME); and Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG).

“These programs are vital to our neighborhoods, families, and residents who otherwise need housing support,” Mayor Jon Mitchell said. “The proposed allocations will strengthen key programs and facilities across the City, and are the product of a thoughtful public input process.”

The draft plan states that: “The primary objective of the CDBG program is to develop viable communities through the provision of decent housing, a suitable living environment, and expanded economic opportunities. HOME funds are dedicated to preserving and creating affordable housing. ESG supports outreach and shelters for homeless persons, as well as programs that prevent or rapidly re-house individuals and families experiencing homelessness.”

This year’s proposed allocations total \$3.8 million in CDBG funding, \$1.9 million in HOME funding, and \$290,000 in ESG funding.

The City’s Office of Housing and Community Development has held an extensive outreach and local input process in recent months, including two public forums held in January via Zoom, followed by a public comment period in February and March. That process led to the current draft plan, which is scheduled

to appear before New Bedford City Council for review at upcoming meetings.

“We look forward to taking up this draft plan at City Council later this month,” City Council President Ian Abreu said. “This Action Plan has direct impacts on all of our neighborhoods and quality of life, and we hope to hear from as many constituents as possible during this comment period.”

“Community Development funding is critical for supporting our neighborhoods and families,” City Councilor Ryan Pereira said. “I’m excited to participate in this public process and listen to the people of New Bedford.”

The current public comment period is open through May 20.

View the draft plan on the Housing and Community Development website, [here:](https://www.newbedford-ma.gov/housing-community-development)
<https://www.newbedford-ma.gov/housing-community-development>

Written comments are encouraged and can be submitted via email to: OHCD@newbedford-ma.gov, or by mail to: Office of Housing and Community Development, 608 Pleasant St., New Bedford MA, 02740.

Gas Back Up Over \$4.20 Per Gallon in Massachusetts

Michael P. Norton
State House News Service

Gas prices in Massachusetts crept higher in recent days as the wait continues for some kind of tax relief plan from the state Legislature. House and Senate Democrats have nixed gas tax

relief proposals but have continued to suggest that tax relief of some sort may be in the cards this spring as the state continues to bask in revenue surpluses.

AAA Massachusetts on Monday said that the average price of a gallon of gas rose 8 cents over the last week, to hit \$4.21 per gallon. It's one cent higher than a month ago and up \$1.42 a gallon over this time last year. The automobile organization blamed high crude oil prices and tight supplies.

"As long as the supply remains tight, it will be hard for crude oil prices to fall and consumers will in turn face higher prices at the pump," AAA's Mary Maguire said. "It now costs drivers in the U.S. about \$23 more to fill up than a year ago."

Remote work has trimmed driving expenses for some people while other motorists and businesses who must use their vehicles have had to dig deeper to keep up with their fixed costs. As warmer weather moves in, higher gas prices will become a consideration for anyone contemplating local or regional day trips or weekends away. As gas prices and inflation cut into household budgets, Gov. Charlie Baker has argued the state can afford a multi-faceted \$700 million tax relief proposal. Legislative Democrats have so far turned the governor down but suggested they remain open to unspecified tax relief ideas, including those to help lower income residents.

**New Bedford's advanced
manufacturing campus moves**

forward, city accepting developer's proposals

The City of New Bedford has issued a request for proposals (RFP) to solicit plans from commercial real estate developers to create an Advanced Manufacturing Campus (AMC) on 100 acres of the municipally owned Whaling City Golf Course on Hathaway Road.

The size and unique advantages of the proposed site make it one of the premier development opportunities in the Northeast. Located on greenfield land at the intersection of two major highways, with a regional airport less than a mile away and direct access to a freight rail line, the AMC is expected to attract strong interest from a wide range of commercial real estate interests.



City of New Bedford photo.

The AMC site can accommodate more than 1 million square feet of new development and host as many as 1,000 workers, while allowing for the continued operation of the adjacent golf

course. A new golf clubhouse, amenities, and parking lot will be built by the City just outside the AMC perimeter.

Mayor Jon Mitchell used the occasion to make clear his expectations, saying: "The global economy is evolving in ways that strengthen the competitive advantages of businesses operating outside major metropolitan areas. Increasingly, leading industries are looking to expand in places that offer easy transportation access for their products, suppliers, and employees, as well as housing affordability and a strong quality of life."

"That is why we have confidence that the Advanced Manufacturing Campus will attract considerable attention from the development community. We already have very positive indications from market research that our site has the acreage, transportation access, and visibility in demand among leading industries of Massachusetts and beyond. Given the valuable asset the City is making available for private development, it goes without saying that the RFP sets a high bar for would-be developers. Successful bidders will be required to craft proposals that directly address the job-creation and revenue interests of the City," Mitchell added.



City of New Bedford photo.

With the City's existing New Bedford Business Park at nearly full capacity, city officials, members of the local legislative delegation, and state economic development experts have been collaborating since 2017 to advance the AMC project to this stage. Past efforts have included a detailed market analysis, an extensive assessment of site conditions, the establishment of a site-specific zoning measure, and special legislation recently signed into law, which removes state recreational restrictions that had barred redevelopment at the location.

City Council President Ian Abreu offered his assessment, noting: "There is a general recognition among city leadership that the Advanced Manufacturing Campus presents a generational opportunity. We have a chance to create jobs for residents while also growing revenues—which helps bolster city government finances and ultimately eases the burden on local taxpayers by broadening our tax base."

City Council Property Committee Chair Maria Giesta added: "We have been pleased with how the Administration and its economic development team have approached the AMC project, and the

entire Property Committee is committed to ensuring that the project continues to advance in a way that benefits local residents, businesses, and users of the golf course.”

For more information, watch the brief video below describing the Advanced Manufacturing Campus, and view the RFP on the City’s website [here](#).

Proposals are due June 16.