

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.

New Bedford requesting responses from nonprofit organizations interested in supporting small businesses

Mayor Jon Mitchell and City officials are requesting responses from local nonprofit organizations interested in supporting small businesses, by managing federal funds to provide targeted grants and technical assistance.

The Small Business Assistance Program is the City’s fourth announcement of investments funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), designed to address economic and public health impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic.

New Bedford-based nonprofit organizations may apply to manage ARPA funds on the City’s behalf to not only help small businesses affected by the pandemic, but also to grow the City’s economy. Nonprofit support can include targeted grants, technical assistance, counseling, and business planning services, along with capital expenses such as business

incubation space in eligible areas, rehabilitation of commercial properties, and COVID-19 mitigation measures.

“Facilitating direct support for local small businesses through qualified, experienced nonprofits will kickstart growth and economic resurgence,” Mayor Jon Mitchell said. “This program will generate jobs and strengthen connections in our nonprofit and business communities.”

All nonprofits selected to receive funds will complete a subrecipient risk assessment, meet with City staff for pre-award counseling, agree to requirements described in the subrecipient grant agreement, and submit quarterly reports for ARPA compliance.

Partnerships between a New Bedford-based nonprofit organization and an organization outside New Bedford are permitted, so long as the local nonprofit is the lead agency for grant management.

Other interventions that support small businesses may be proposed beyond those listed above, but they must be related and reasonably proportional to the harm caused by the pandemic, and reasonably designed to address the identified harm. The program is designed to be forward-looking and accelerate local business development as the City emerges from the pandemic, rather than compensate for business losses from COVID.

“The Small Business Assistance Program will have the effect of aligning business and purpose, as New Bedford-based nonprofit organizations will provide support to small businesses while they regain their footing, leading to profitability and a rebound in our City’s economy,” said Ward 5 City Councilor Scott Lima, chair of the council’s redevelopment committee.

Eligible nonprofit organizations can view the Request for Responses on the City’s ARPA website: www.newbedford-ma.gov/arpa.

Massachusetts Senate Passes Bill To Grow, Diversify Cannabis Sector

By Colin A. Young
State House News Service

Wide-ranging marijuana legislation that targets some of the most persistent issues that activists, regulators, businesses and municipalities have said are holding Massachusetts back from realizing the full potential of the 2016 legalization law cleared the Senate unanimously Thursday afternoon with senators pitching it as both an economic development and racial justice bill.

The bill (S 2801) would put tighter restrictions and enhanced oversight on the host community agreements marijuana businesses are required to enter into with their host communities, make grants and loans available through a new Cannabis Social Equity Trust Fund to participants in the Cannabis Control Commission's social equity (SE) program or economic empowerment (EE) priority applicants, and create a method for cities and towns to authorize the on-site cannabis consumption establishments that are already authorized under the CCC's regulations.

"By clarifying the requirements of the host community agreements, making financial investments to increase social equity and allowing for the full implementation of the cannabis industry through permitting social consumption authorization, I am confident that this legislation aids in the continued growth of a competitive and equitable commercial

marijuana industry here in the commonwealth of Massachusetts,” Senate Ways and Means Committee Chairman Michael Rodrigues said as he introduced the bill on the floor.

The Legislature has long maintained a mostly hands-off approach to marijuana policy. Lawmakers passed up their opportunities to act before voters approved decriminalization in 2008, medical marijuana in 2012 and adult legalization in 2016, but then delayed and rewrote significant portions of the 2016 ballot law legalizing marijuana. Aside from a bill that the House passed in early 2020 with provisions similar to the Senate bill, the Legislature has largely avoided cannabis issues since 2017.

Sen. Sonia Chang-Diaz, who chairs the Cannabis Policy Committee for the Senate, said the bill that sailed through her committee without opposition seeks to remedy “long-standing problems with long-identified solutions.”

“If you talk to advocates, to policy experts, to the Cannabis Control Commission, you will find near-universal agreement. They will tell you ... that the costs of entry into the industry are too high and that there is a severe lack of access to capital in this industry. It typically requires one to one and a half million dollars in liquidity to open a new cannabis retail shop or three to five million for a manufacturing facility,” Chang-Diaz said. She added, “So when you need that kind of cash on hand in order to get into the business, in order to get your foot in the door, it’s no surprise that despite our best intentions, the industry has remained predominantly white and predominantly in already wealthy hands.”

Chang-Diaz likened the marijuana bill to other steps the Senate has taken to confront racial injustice, like passing criminal justice and policing reform laws, recognizing Juneteenth as a holiday and last week’s vote to ban discrimination based on natural and protective hairstyles in

workplaces, schools and public spaces.

“Tackling our gaping racial wealth divide is the next front in this work toward pursuing racial justice in our state,” she said. The Jamaica Plain Democrat added, “So we know that if we are serious about the work of racial justice, we have to tackle this racial wealth divide. And that is why I’m so proud that we are taking up this bill today because this bill is a racial wealth gap bill.”

Massachusetts was the first state in the country to mandate that equity and inclusion be part of its legal cannabis framework and was the first to launch programs specifically designed to assist entrepreneurs and businesses from communities disproportionately harmed by the decades of marijuana prohibition.

But more than three years since the first legal sale here, just 6 percent of the licenses issued for the cannabis industry have gone to SE program participants or EE priority applicants, the Joint Committee on Cannabis Policy said when it released its draft of the legislation. Out of more than 1,000 applications submitted to the CCC as of November, just 232 came from SE or EE applicants.

The bill would make grants and loans, including no-interest loans and forgivable loans, available to participants in the Cannabis Control Commission’s social equity (SE) program or economic empowerment (EE) priority applicants through a Cannabis Social Equity Trust Fund. Each year, the fund would get 10 percent of the money in the Marijuana Regulation Fund, which is where revenue brought in by the state’s marijuana excise tax, application and licensing fees, and industry penalties is deposited.

For fiscal year 2021, a 10 percent share of just the cannabis excise revenue (\$112.37 million) would have worked out to about \$11.24 million for the trust fund. Rodrigues estimated

that the 10 percent share for fiscal year 2023 would work out to about \$18 million while Chang-Diaz forecasted a range of between \$15 million and \$18 million for FY 2023.

More than two years ago, the CCC approved regulations that paved the way for social consumption establishments where adults could buy marijuana and use it in a social setting. But the agency said the pilot program it designed for up to 12 communities “would not be able to begin without a change in state law or the passage of legislation that will first allow cities and towns to authorize social consumption in their communities.”

The Senate bill would allow communities to opt-in to allowing social consumption businesses within their borders via local ordinance in addition to making a change necessary for cities or towns to use the existing local referendum avenue to green light marijuana cafes. The Senate rejected an amendment from Minority Leader Bruce Tarr that would have eliminated the ordinance option and required the decision to go before voters.

“Permitting this to go through the local political process, this decisionmaking to go through the local political process the same as all other town ordinances do, will both save municipal resources needed to execute a ballot question and avoid delays resulting from having to wait months or years until the next election cycle in some cases, while also maintaining accountability to the voters,” Chang-Diaz said.

Discussion of social consumption sites has typically led to talk of road safety and senators offered a handful of amendments meant to put driving while impaired by marijuana on an equal footing as driving while drunk. Most of those amendments were either withdrawn or rejected, but the Senate did adopt a Tarr amendment that would create a special commission on drugged driving to monitor and report on the development of technology related to the reliable testing of

marijuana impairment in drivers.

"While I would have hoped that we would have taken action to make some statutory changes in this bill, the commission that is set up by this particular amendment sets the foundation for us to be able to move forward and make those changes in the future based on additional information and the insight of experts," Tarr said. He cited data released by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in February estimating a 15.5 percent increase in roadway fatalities in Massachusetts over the first nine months of 2021 compared to the same period in 2020 from 258 to 298.

On the issue of host community agreements (HCAs), the bill would direct the CCC to "review and approve host community agreements" and also to "regulate and enforce all host community agreements." The CCC could only approve applications for provisional licensure or renewal if it has certified that the HCA is in compliance.

The bill would also more specifically define what can and cannot be included in the contracts, and would codify a municipality's right to waive the requirement to have an HCA as a handful have already done. Through the adoption of an amendment from Sen. John Velis, the bill would also require the CCC to develop a model HCA that communities can use as a template to ensure their agreements are in line with what the CCC would approve.

HCAs have given businesses, prospective businesses and regulators fits basically since the CCC began licensing businesses here. Entrepreneurs, lawyers, lobbyists and regulators have pointed to stories about cities and towns demanding more from businesses than state laws allow, up to 3 percent of gross sales. The CCC began wrestling with the issue in 2018, determined it lacked the authority to intervene or reject an application based on the HCA and voted in January 2019 to formally request that the Legislature give it that

authority.

The bill that the Senate passed Thursday has good odds of being in the mix as lawmakers send bills to the governor's desk in the coming months; House Speaker Ron Mariano's office has said addressing many of the same issues is a priority for him.

"If the legislation is to pass, I want to thank the House as well for their consideration they'll give to this legislation," CCC Chairman Steven Hoffman said Thursday morning before the Senate debate began.

Gov. Baker announces approval of EDIP supporting job growth, business expansion across Massachusetts

"The Commonwealth's Economic Assistance Coordinating Council (EACC) approved seven projects for participation in the Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP). These projects are expected to create 129 net new jobs and retain 151 jobs throughout Massachusetts, while leveraging approximately \$88.2 million in private investment. Of the applicants this quarter, four are manufacturers and four are located in Gateway Cities. Additionally, one new Vacant Storefront District was approved.

The EACC has approved 313 economic development projects since the beginning of the Baker-Polito Administration in January 2015. These projects will lead to the creation of 24,441 jobs, retention of 41,235 existing jobs, and will leverage almost

\$7.9 billion in private investment. Additionally, the EACC has assisted 134 manufacturing companies and 140 companies in Gateway Cities during this period.

Certified Projects:

Island Creek Oysters (New Bedford) Founded in the early 1990s, Island Creek Oysters is a cutting-edge aquaculture leader with a vertically integrated business platform consisting of: a headquarters, shellfish hatchery, world-class R&D center, shellfish farms, wholesale distribution, with e-commerce retail and hospitality businesses. They plan to establish a world class, disruptive aquaculture ICO CONSERVAS cannery and associated infrastructure in New Bedford to bolster and create resiliency within the aquaculture industry through innovative “tinned,” shelf stable, conservas products. The project entails the creation of 12 new full-time jobs, the retention of one existing job, and a private investment of \$1.68 million. The city of New Bedford plans to approve a five-year STA valued at approximately \$75,280. The EACC Board has approved EDIP investment tax credits in the amount of \$120,000.

SolaBlock, Inc. (Pittsfield) SolaBlock is a developer and manufacturer of a product called a Solar Masonry Unit (SMU). A SMU combines a photovoltaic cell (PV) that is embedded into a masonry block that creates a sealed unit that is protected from the elements. The SMUs are then used on exteriors of building sidewalls and create renewable solar energy for the building. They plan to lease a building in Pittsfield for final assembly. The company plans to create 17 new full-time jobs, retain four full-time employees and make a private investment of approximately \$625,000. The city of Pittsfield plans to approve a five-year TIF valued at approximately \$35,910. The EACC Board has approved EDIP investment tax credits in the amount of \$170,000.

FastCAP Systems Corporation (Wakefield) FastCAP Systems Corp.

dba Nanoramic Laboratories was founded in 2008 as a spin-out MIT project. They have deep proprietary knowledge in the energy storage space. Most recently they have developed an electrode process that increases power and density while reducing cost compared to a lithium-ion battery design. The company has proven its battery technology with various markets and now needs to demonstrate manufacturing at scale. This project involves a relocation to Wakefield to a space that is 1.5 times larger to allow for continued R&D alongside a pilot plant scale-up. The project entails the creation of 40 new full-time jobs, retention of 53 existing jobs, and a private investment of \$21.85 million. The town of Wakefield plans to approve a five-year TIF valued at approximately \$38,626. The EACC Board has approved EDIP investment tax credits in the amount of \$106,700.

Local Incentive Only Projects:

Agilent Technologies, Inc. (Chicopee) Agilent Technologies, Inc. was established in 1999 as a spin-off from Hewlett-Packard. Today they are a global leader in life sciences, diagnostics and applied chemical markets. They are seeking to expand their manufacturing footprint in the U.S. with the “high-value plastics” microplates that are used in cellular analysis instruments. Currently most of these are manufactured in China or through several sites in a sub-assembly process. Agilent plans on converting a manufacturing site into a digital and automated state-of-the-art production factory. Agilent plans to create 40 new full-time jobs, retain 86 full-time employees and make a private investment of approximately \$33.25 million. The city of Chicopee approved a 15-year TIF valued at approximately \$2.6 million.

330 Jackson Street, LLC (Lowell) The Justice Center Parking Garage is a to-be-built eight-story, 541-space parking garage in downtown Lowell. It will be located directly adjacent to the Lowell Justice Center; a newly built facility that provides space for the Superior, District, Probate & Family,

Juvenile, and Housing Courts of Middlesex County. The Justice Center Parking Garage will be a part of the Hamilton Canal Innovation District (HCID), an ongoing two million square foot development in Downtown Lowell. The project will result in the creation of six new jobs and an investment of \$18.9 million. The city of Lowell has approved a 10-year Tax Financing Agreement with a value of approximately \$883,925.

Milton Rents, Inc. (Randolph) The Milton Organization is a collection of business and real-estate entities, the most significant of which is Southworth-Milton, Inc., dba Milton CAT. Milton CAT is a private, family-run business that is approximately 50 years old and one of the largest dealers of Caterpillar equipment in the country. A separate company in their portfolio, Milton Rents, is a place for equipment rentals and used machinery sales in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, and Maine. They plan to open a new location in Randolph. The project entails the creation of 11 new full-time jobs, retention of four existing jobs, and a private investment of \$6.8 million. The town of Randolph approved a six-year TIF with a value of approximately \$312,409.

MIG-Acton, LLC (Sutton) MIG-Acton was established in 2008 to purchase and develop commercial real estate. The proposed project is the construction of an approximately 42,000-square-foot mixed-use building, to be constructed on a parcel of land in an industrial zone, that presents certain challenges. The building will be partitioned into five bays, each consisting of more than 8,000 square feet to be used for light manufacturing, warehousing, maintenance, etc., and some office space. One of the five bays will be occupied by an affiliated company of the developer. This project will create three new jobs, retain three existing jobs, and consist of an investment of \$5.1 million. The town of Sutton approved a five-year Tax Financing Agreement with a value of approximately \$60,329.

Vacant Storefront Districts:

The **City of Brockton** has applied for an additional vacant storefront district. The Ames Street District covers between North Main Street to the West and Canton Street to the East. This district contains four storefronts that have been vacant for over a year.”

Port of New Bedford Awards \$27.9 Million North Terminal Expansion Project Contract

Last week, the New Bedford Port Authority awarded a \$27,943,800 construction project contract to D.W. White Construction of Acushnet, MA for the North Terminal Expansion project in the Port of New Bedford.

The North Terminal Expansion is a transformative port infrastructure project that will spur long-term economic development by meeting the infrastructure needs of commercial fishermen, the offshore wind industry, and other port users, to ensure economic growth and increased efficiency.

This project was a culmination of federal, state, and private investment that will build a north/south bulkhead at the North Terminal in New Bedford’s upper harbor. The project will also spur significant investment in the Port of New Bedford in the years to come.

Led by the New Bedford Port Authority (NBPA), this project will create a safer and more efficient connection between the New Bedford Harbor and the surface transportation system. More specifically the project will:

- Extend the North Terminal Bulkhead in the upper harbor;
- Backfill the new bulkhead with approximately 97,000 cubic yards of clean suitable material sourced from CAD Cell 4. Approximately 150,000 square feet of upland terminal space will be created across the area backfilled landward of the bulkhead;
- Complete the new CAD cell with 480,000 cubic yards capacity to receive contaminated dredge material within New Bedford Harbor. Design and permitting for this CAD cell has been previously completed. Dredging of approximately 25,000 cubic yards of contaminated material located in front of the North Terminal;
- Increase infrastructure to support the offshore wind industry while also providing much needed berthing space for commercial fishing vessels.

This project will result in significant long-term economic development, including:

- 898 new and permanent jobs;
- an additional \$65.1 million in additional wages and local consumption;
- an additional \$11.5 million in state and local tax revenue.

“This project represents a major step in our effort to modernize the Port of New Bedford. It will enhance the long-term competitiveness of our maritime industries and help create quality jobs for our residents,” Mayor Jon Mitchell said. “I am grateful for the skill and determination of the Port Authority’s team in overcoming legal, financial and engineering obstacles, along with the support of Senator Markey and the Baker Administration, that have enabled the project to proceed. We look forward to working with DW White, a leading contractor in Greater New Bedford with a long

history of responsible corporate citizenship.”

This project is one of the most significant harbor development projects in the history of the port. The Port of New Bedford is poised to address, on an on-going basis, the issue of modernizing the port’s docking facilities, as well as updating its infrastructure ensuring that New Bedford remains the #1 commercial fishing port in the country.

Massachusetts Gov. Baker’s administration files Fiscal Year 2022 Supplemental Budget

Supports continued COVID-19 response, provider stabilization and other immediate needs.

The Baker-Polito Administration today filed a Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) supplemental budget proposal that supports the Commonwealth’s ongoing response to COVID-19 and invests in other priority areas with immediate need, including child care, human services, housing, climate change preparedness and local infrastructure. The bill recommends \$2.4 billion in supplemental appropriations, at a net state cost of \$1.6 billion, relying on surplus revenues realized through the first half of FY22.

“Massachusetts remains in a strong fiscal position, which enables us to use surplus Fiscal Year 2022 revenues to sustain our efforts to respond to COVID-19 and invest in areas like early education, human services, housing and more,” said Governor Charlie Baker. “Thanks to our careful management of state finances in partnership with the Legislature and the

resilience of our economy, revenues continue to exceed projections, making Massachusetts well-positioned to make these investments.”

“This supplemental Fiscal Year 2022 spending plan expands on our efforts to support the Commonwealth’s families and communities, including resources for counseling, advocacy and intervention services to fill an important gap in federal funds for victims of crimes,” said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito. “We look forward to partnering with the Legislature to make these and other critical investments through this spending plan.”

The spending bill proposes a significant investment to stabilize child care providers, special education schools and human service providers to ensure that the critical services that they provide remain available to all who need them, despite enrollment and utilization fluctuations caused by the pandemic. The legislation includes \$450 million to extend Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) stabilization grants for child care providers through fiscal year 2023 (FY23). It also includes \$140 million for special education schools to continue support through FY23 that will help address direct care and clinical staffing needs and ensure that these schools are able to safely provide residential and day education services to approximately 7,000 children between the ages of 3 and 21. The bill further proposes \$401 million to extend rate enhancements for human service providers and support other investments in Home & Community Based Services; \$346 million of this spending is supported by federal funding provided through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), for a total of \$55 million in net state cost.

The bill increases support for children and families, with a focus on those whose lives have been significantly disrupted by the pandemic. It recommends \$100 million for matching grants to youth-focused nonprofits that will support the construction and renovation of new facilities for children

across the state. It provides \$60 million to maintain access to rental assistance through the Rental Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) program as the federal Emergency Rental Assistance program begins to wind down. Additionally, the bill includes \$8.4 million to continue additional short-term assistance to families fostering children during the pandemic, which will benefit approximately 4,500 foster families caring for 6,700 children.

The Administration's supplemental budget also includes \$700 million dedicated to the public health response to COVID-19, such as providing rapid tests and surveillance testing in congregate care settings, administering monoclonal antibody treatments, maintaining vaccination sites and ensuring sufficient staffing in health care facilities. After anticipated FEMA reimbursements, these initiatives are expected to have a net cost of \$439 million. These funds will complement the \$101 million supplemental budget signed into law last week to support COVID-19 response.

"The surplus we've realized in FY22 thus far reflects the continued strength of the Massachusetts economy and gives us the opportunity to address additional critical areas of need across the state," said Administration and Finance Secretary Michael J. Heffernan. "The Baker-Polito Administration is pleased to propose a spending plan that will redirect surplus revenues to high-impact investments in human services, childcare, education, local infrastructure and more that will continue the Commonwealth's recovery from COVID-19."

The Administration also recommends supporting a range of infrastructure and climate-related needs in local communities. It proposes \$100 million for a supplemental Chapter 90 distribution, \$100 million to help municipalities repair roads from winter damage and \$150 million in supplemental grants to fund climate change resiliency initiatives, including the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program.

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

- \$60 million to stabilize and support counseling, advocacy and intervention services for victims of crime through FY25 until federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) resources are restored;
- \$50 million to support the guardian ad litem expansion proposal – described more fully below;
- \$14 million to fully fund service improvements for men who are civilly committed for substance use treatment under Section 35;
- \$10 million to ensure Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled and Children (EAEDC) payments are uninterrupted through caseload volatility;
- \$5 million to expand STEM teacher professional development, materials and technology;
- \$5 million to support the implementation of the new 988 emergency call line;
- \$5 million for Department of Mental Health (DMH) housing repairs and additional housing vouchers;
- \$2 million to optimize government services for hybrid work models;
- \$1.8 million to support behavioral health services for Haitian and Afghan evacuees;
- \$1.1 million for Safe Water Initiative Massachusetts (SWIM) grants and other summer water safety investments.

The legislation also includes several policy proposals, including:

- A section that will mandate the appointment of a guardian ad

litem (GAL) in every alleged child abuse or neglect case through the Juvenile Court – GALs will provide children in the custody of the Department of Children and Families (DCF) an independent advocate responsible for considering only the child's best interests; an accompanying appropriation is filed in the bill to support the recruitment, training and compensation of additional GALs;

- A proposal that will exempt payments received through the Commonwealth's COVID-19 Essential Employee Premium Pay program from the Massachusetts income tax;
- Sections that make corrections to previously signed legislation related to COVID-19 response that will improve implementation of spending priorities;
- Sections to extend certain COVID-19 state of emergency provisions, including the eviction provision that is currently set to expire on April 1, 2022 and will be extended until January 1, 2023.

To read the Governor's filing letter, [click here](#).

Governor Baker Announces Plan to Begin Distributing Payments to Low-Income Workers

The Baker-Polito Administration today announced plans to begin distribution of \$500 payments to 500,000 low-income workers as part of the COVID-19 Essential Employee Premium Pay program.

These payments represent the first round of funds to be distributed as part of the \$460 million program, which was enacted in December when Governor Baker signed a \$4 billion spending plan for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. These payments, worth \$250 million, will be mailed to 500,000 people by the end of March.

“I was pleased to sign the COVID-19 Essential Employee Premium Pay program into law in December, and our Administration has worked quickly to design the parameters for the program with plans to efficiently begin distribution of these payments by the end of March,” said Governor Charlie Baker. “This program will support those workers who served our communities, especially early in the pandemic.”

“This first round of payments to low-income workers will provide meaningful support for individuals who continued to work despite the global pandemic,” said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito. “We are pleased that our Administration has been able to quickly design this program to get funds out the door to those workers who the program is intended to support.”

Click here to learn more about the program:
www.mass.gov/premiumpay

The law provided for the Administration to design the program and develop eligibility parameters that will ensure this critical support is provided quickly to deserving workers across the Commonwealth. Based on filed 2020 Massachusetts tax returns, individuals will be eligible for payments if their income from employment was at least \$12,750 and their total income put them below 300% of the federal poverty level.

The lower bound of this range equates to working 20 hours a week for 50 weeks at minimum wage as of 2020 (\$12.75). The federal poverty level is set by the federal government and increases with household or family size. For example, the maximum total income for a single filer with no dependents

will be \$38,280; a resident who files with a spouse and two dependents, or with no spouse and three dependents, could be eligible with a household income up to \$78,600. Married filers can each be eligible, provided each independently qualifies. Based on these parameters, the below chart indicates eligibility for these payments by household size:



Individuals who received unemployment compensation in 2020 will not be eligible for the first round of payments, nor will Commonwealth executive branch employees who received or will receive a one-time payment from the state as their employer.

The legislation creating the Premium Pay program included \$500 million for low-income essential workers; this \$460 million program comprises the majority of those funds, and \$40 million was allocated to fund previous agreements with state employee unions. Additional information on plans to disburse subsequent rounds of funds after March will be released in the future.

Massachusetts Gov. Baker's administration files fiscal year 2023 budget and tax relief proposals

\$48.5 billion budget filed alongside comprehensive tax relief plan.

The Baker-Polito Administration today filed its Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) budget proposal, a \$48.5 billion plan that

continues to support economic growth across Massachusetts and sustains efforts to address the COVID-19 pandemic, while fully funds the Student Opportunity Act, and making key investments in other critical areas, including housing and health care.

Alongside this fiscally responsible and balanced budget proposal, submitted as House 2, the Baker-Polito Administration is filing a comprehensive tax proposal to provide relief for housing and childcare costs, eliminate the income tax for hundreds of thousands of low-income taxpayers, and maintain Massachusetts' competitiveness. The proposed changes would allow nearly \$700 million to remain in the hands of taxpayers on an annual basis starting immediately in tax year 2022.

"Our Fiscal Year 2023 budget will help position Massachusetts strongly for the future by making key investments to support economic growth, sustain our nation-leading educational system, and support the health and wellbeing of our residents," said Governor Charlie Baker. "At the same time, we are able to grow our reserves to historic levels and offer a tax relief proposal that will provide substantial relief for low-income seniors and working families. We look forward to working with our legislative colleagues to adopt a spending plan for FY23 that supports a strong and equitable economic recovery across the Commonwealth."

"The FY23 budget recommendation maintains our Administration's strong support for cities and towns with another increase in local aid consistent with tax revenue growth alongside other substantial investments to help the economic growth and development of Massachusetts communities," said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito. "This plan takes advantage of our strong fiscal position to increase opportunity for individuals and families and continues our work in priority areas including treatment and prevention of substance addiction, sexual assault and domestic violence, promoting equality and diversity, and increasing access to education, job skills

training, and high-value careers.”

“The Baker-Polito Administration is proud to submit an FY23 budget that is fiscally responsible, brings the Rainy Day Fund to record levels, and makes significant investments to support those who need it most, all while affording tax cuts that will help hundreds of thousands of taxpayers across the Commonwealth,” said Administration and Finance Secretary Michael J. Heffernan. “We look forward to collaborating with the Legislature in the coming months to finalize a spending plan that continues to support growth, opportunity, and recovery across the state while limiting future budgetary risk.”

Tax Relief Proposal

The comprehensive tax relief plan filed today alongside the FY23 budget includes proposals that will provide \$700 million in tax relief to low-income families and residents and maintain Massachusetts’ competitiveness. With a strong revenue picture and the budget projecting a significant deposit in to the Stabilization Fund, the Commonwealth can afford to provide this relief for working families and seniors. The plan proposes to:

- Double the maximum Senior Circuit Breaker Credit to lower the overall tax burden for more than 100,000 lower-income homeowners aged 65+
- Increase the rental deduction cap from \$3,000 to \$5,000, allowing approximately 881,000 Massachusetts renters to keep approximately \$77 million more annually
- Double the dependent care credit to \$480 for one qualifying individual and \$960 for two or more, and double the household dependent care credit rate to \$360 for one qualifying individual and \$720 for two or more to benefit more than 700,000 families
- Increase the Massachusetts adjusted gross income (AGI) thresholds for “no tax status” to \$12,400 for single filers,

\$24,800 for joint filers, and \$18,650 for head of households, which will provide direct relief to more than 234,000 low-income filers

- Double the estate tax threshold and eliminate the current “cliff effect” that taxes the full amount below the threshold
- Change the short-term capital gains tax rate to 5% to align the Commonwealth with most other states

House 2 Fiscal Overview

The proposed FY23 budget is based on the \$36.915 billion consensus tax revenue estimate, which anticipates a 2.7% growth in total collections over revised FY22 tax estimates. House 2 recommends a total of \$48.5 billion in authorized spending and transfers, excluding the Medical Assistance Trust Fund transfer, which is approximately 0.5% above Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22).

Through fiscally responsible policies and in close collaboration with the Legislature, the Baker-Polito Administration has brought the budget into structural balance and built up financial reserves to historic high levels. With a current balance of \$4.64 billion, the Stabilization Fund is already more than four times greater than its balance at the start of the Administration.

The House 2 budget includes a \$749 million increase to the Stabilization Fund, which, in combination with projected FY22 transfers, will grow the fund to an all-time high of \$6.64 billion by the end of FY23.

Providing Record Investments in Massachusetts Students

In the House 2 budget, an increase of \$591.4 million is recommended to fully fund the Student Opportunity Act, including \$485 million in Chapter 70 funding, with a focus on school districts serving low-income students, for a total of \$5.989 billion. The FY23 proposal also includes a \$41 million increase over FY22 for special education circuit breaker

reimbursement for cities and towns, and a \$64.8 million increase in charter school reimbursement funding.

House 2 recommends \$31.1 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. This funding will allow over 17,100 students, representing 6% of all Massachusetts high schoolers, to enroll in these programs.

The FY23 budget proposal also includes a \$1.45 billion investment for college readiness, affordability, and degree completion. This funding includes more than \$155 million in financial aid grants, 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 – the largest increase in financial aid in over two decades.

Investing in Housing Stability

The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the state's existing housing challenges and brought further economic instability for many across the Commonwealth. In House 2, the Administration proposes historic reforms and investments in rental assistance, re-housing benefits, and housing vouchers to expedite recovery and create long-lasting improvements in housing stability and access to homeownership. Building on the Eviction Diversion Initiative (EDI), which has distributed more than \$500 million in state and federally funded rental assistance to individuals, families, and landlords in crisis, House 2 significantly expands state funding and eligibility for the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) and HomeBASE programs, with the goal of reducing evictions and homelessness.

The budget recommends \$80 million for RAFT, an increase of \$58

million (264%) above FY22, which will support a permanent benefit limit increase to \$7,000 over 12 months, versus \$4,000 pre-pandemic, and serve an estimated 15,000 households, up from 5,000-6,000 previously. \$56.9 million is recommended for HomeBASE, a \$30.9 million (119%) increase above FY22, to serve more than 4,100 families in FY23, versus a projected 1,885 in FY22. It will also support an increase to the maximum benefit from \$10,000 over one year to \$20,000 over two years, which will allow for more extensive and flexible support to households.

House 2 also proposes reforms to the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) to maximize utilization of mobile vouchers and align benefits with federal rental assistance programs operated by the same local housing authorities. \$145.6 million is projected to be available for MRVP in FY23, an increase of 223% since FY15, which will support a reduction in tenant rent share from 40% to 30%, projected to benefit more than 9,000 households across the Commonwealth, and a shift to a new payment model to give families more housing choice and flexibility.

Expanding Affordable Childcare Options

House 2 provides \$802 million in funding for the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), an increase of \$273.9 million (52%) since 2015. This funding includes \$693.7 million in funding for income-eligible and DCF- and DTA-related childcare, which incorporates \$53.9 million to annualize the implementation of a more equitable parent fee scale that improves childcare affordability. The updated fee scale will result in virtually all subsidized families paying a fee that is 7% of their income or less in FY23.

Expanding Health Care Services for the Most Vulnerable

The House 2 budget proposal protects core programs and builds on investments made over the last seven years with meaningful

health care reforms that will expand services for and reduce the burden on the most vulnerable, while improving the accessibility of equitable, world class care for all Massachusetts residents.

The budget recommends \$17.811 billion gross / \$7.169 billion net for MassHealth, which includes \$115 million to expand outpatient and urgent behavioral health services informed by the Roadmap for Behavioral Health Reform, a multi-year blueprint that incorporates feedback from hundreds of individuals, families, providers, and other behavioral health stakeholders. The MassHealth budget recommendation also incorporates an increase of \$21 million to expand the Medicare Savings Program, which will reduce out-of-pocket health care spending and prescription drug costs for approximately 34,000 low-income seniors and disabled individuals.

The Administration is also proposing new investments to support families that are fostering children in the care of the Department of Children and Families and encourage recruitment of additional foster parents, including \$13.4 million that will support approximately 4,500 families who provide care for 6,700 children.

Promoting Diversity and Opportunity

The FY23 budget proposal builds on the Administration's longstanding commitment to promoting equality and opportunity for communities of color with more than \$20 million invested in targeted DESE college and career pathway programs, including Early College, Innovation Pathways, and Dual Enrollment programs. It also maintains over \$30 million for other initiatives aligned with the recommendations of the Governor's Black Advisory Commission (BAC) and Latino Advisory Commission (LAC). This funding includes support for YouthWorks Summer Jobs, small business development, financial literacy, and workforce training.

House 2 provides \$3.9 million to the Supplier Diversity Office (SDO) to continue its work to ensure accountability and compliance with diversity goals, oversee agency diversity spending, and audit and review spending data.

Encouraging Economic Growth and Development

House 2 continues the Baker-Polito Administration's focus on promoting economic growth, opportunity, and equity for communities across the Commonwealth. The proposal includes \$4 million for the Small Business Technical Assistance Grant Program to support an estimated 1,500-2,000 entrepreneurs and small businesses, especially those owned by women, immigrants, veterans, and people of color. House 2 proposes \$7.5 million for the Community Empowerment and Reinvestment Grant program.

This budget maintains support for the Career Technical Initiative, providing \$17.9 million in total funding across the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) and DESE. The initiative is designed to address the worker shortage and skills gap in the trades and technical fields, including plumbing, HVAC, manufacturing, and robotics, and it offers industry-recognized credentialing and career pathways with training aligned to apprenticeships and post-secondary degrees.

These investments build on the Administration's work through the COVID-19 pandemic to support more than 15,400 businesses across the Commonwealth with over \$700 million in relief. This program – the largest per capita state-sponsored business relief program in the nation – prioritized aid for specific economic sectors and demographics known to be the most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and worked with a wide range of partners to ensure businesses that needed it most applied to the program.

Addressing Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have created additional

challenges for survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence. The Governor's Council to Address Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence, chaired by Lieutenant Governor Polito, has continued to work closely with community partners and stakeholders to ensure that survivors and their families have access to necessary services and supports.

House 2 furthers these efforts by recommending \$123.4 million in total funding for services dedicated to the prevention and treatment of sexual assault and domestic violence, a 91% increase in funding since FY15.

Substance Addiction Treatment and Prevention

The Administration, working closely with the Legislature, has nearly quadrupled funding for substance addiction treatment and prevention since taking office. These efforts have helped the Commonwealth add more than 1,200 patient treatment beds, including more than 800 beds for adults at varying treatment levels. House 2 proposes \$543.8 million in total funding across multiple agencies 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 BAKER-POLITO ADMINISTRATION'S FY23 BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS BY NUMBERS

Supporting Local Government

- Increases the Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA) investment by \$31.5 million compared to the FY22 budget, consistent with the expected 2.7% growth in tax revenue and keeping a promise made by Governor Baker and Lt. Governor Polito at the outset of their administration
- Total UGGA investment of \$1.2 billion to local cities and towns across the Commonwealth
- Under the Baker-Polito Administration, total annual UGGA has

increased by \$253.9 million

- \$6 million in funding for Community Compact related programs including best practices and regionalization and efficiency grants, an increase of \$2.4 million (66%) above FY22
- \$4.8 million for the Public Safety Staffing Grant Program managed by the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security
- \$3 million for district local technical assistance

K-12 Education

Fully funds the landmark Student Opportunity Act, adding a total of \$591.4 million in new spending.

- \$485 million in Chapter 70 funding, for a total Chapter 70 investment of \$5.989 billion
- \$41 million increase for special education circuit breaker reimbursement for local cities and towns
- \$64.8 million in additional funding for charter school reimbursement

In addition to Chapter 70, provides \$952.8 million for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, including \$31.1 million to scale up proven programs that will develop and expand college and career pathways for more than 17,100 high school students, a \$12 million increase above FY22 funding

Early Education and Childcare

- \$802 million for Early Education and Care (EEC), an increase of \$273.9 million (52%) since FY15. The recommendation includes:
 - \$53.9 million to annualize the implementation of a more equitable parent fee scale that improves childcare affordability across the Commonwealth
 - \$9.2 million across the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) and EEC that would provide childcare subsidy access for individuals participating in Supplemental Nutrition

Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training programming

- \$5.5 million across the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and EEC to increase enrollment of DCF-involved children in childcare and expand a temporary childcare program to reach more children and provide additional wraparound services

Higher Education

- \$1.45 billion for the Department of Higher Education, University of Massachusetts, and state universities and community colleges, which includes:
 - More than \$155 million in financial aid grants, 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
 - \$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

Housing and Homelessness

- \$716.5 million for the Department of Housing and Community Development, a \$132.4 million (23%) increase above FY22, including:
 - \$213.2 million for the Emergency Assistance family shelter system
 - \$145.6 million for MRVP to support more than 9,000 vouchers in FY23, an increase of 223% since FY15
 - \$85 million in funding for Local Housing Authorities
 - \$83.3 million, a \$25.4 million (44%) increase above the FY22 GAA, for Homeless Individual Shelters

- \$80 million for Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT), an increase of \$58 million (264%) above FY22
- \$56.9 million for HomeBASE Household Assistance, a \$30.9 million (119%) increase above FY22
- \$12.5 million for the DMH Rental Subsidy Program, a collaborative program through which DMH provides mental health services and DHCD provides rental assistance
- \$8.2 million for Housing Consumer Education Centers to help renters and homeowners secure and maintain stable housing
- \$5 million to continue an innovative model to create new housing opportunities with wraparound services for chronically homeless individuals

Economic Development

- \$10 million for a new direct appropriation supporting the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center, a quasi-public agency tasked with building the life sciences community in Massachusetts
- \$7.5 million for the Community Empowerment and Reinvestment Grant program to support development in socially and economically disadvantaged communities
- \$4 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
- \$2.5 million for Advanced Manufacturing Training

Labor and Workforce Development

- \$440.1 million for workforce development programs and initiatives across a wide range of state agencies, a \$191.3 million (77%) increase since the Administration took office
- \$16.9 million in total funding to continue transforming vocational high schools into Career Technical Institutes running three shifts per day to provides pathways to high-

demand vocational trade careers, including plumbing, HVAC, manufacturing, and robotics

- \$16.2 million for the YouthWorks Summer Jobs Program to subsidize summer job opportunities and provide soft job skills education for youths
- \$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 under the new rate methodology that better reflects the cost of benchmarking direct care and clinical staff wages
- \$115 million to expand outpatient and urgent behavioral health services
- \$21 million to expand the Medicare Savings Program, reducing out-of-pocket health care spending and drug costs for approximately 34,000 low-income older adults and disabled individuals
- \$10 million in grants to local health departments to support municipalities' capacity to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic
- \$671.9 million for the Executive Office of Elder Affairs, a \$400.1 million (147%) increase since FY15
- \$84.1 million to fully fund the Turning 22 program at DDS
- \$1.191 billion for the Department of Children and Families, an increase of \$363.6 million (44%) since 2015, including \$13.4 million to support families that are fostering children in DCF care and to encourage recruitment of new foster families
- \$49.3 million for the Chelsea Soldiers' Home, a \$13.2 million (37%) increase above FY22, which supports the Fall 2022 opening of a new 154-bed state-of-the-art Community Living Center.

Substance Addiction Prevention and Treatment

- \$543.8 million provided in FY23 across a variety of state

agencies, an increase of \$424.5 million (356%) since FY15. Funding includes:

- \$184.1 million for a variety of treatment and prevention services at the Department of Public Health
- \$260 million through a Section 1115 Substance Use Disorder (SUD) waiver from the federal government
- \$31 million for inpatient treatment beds operated by the Department of Mental Health
- \$65.9 million across public safety and law enforcement agencies, primarily for the provision of medication-assisted treatment

Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence

• \$123.4 million across the budget, a 91% increase since FY15, which includes:

- \$56.1 million in funding for the Department of Public Health to carry out domestic violence and sexual assault prevention and survivor services, as well as emergency and transitional residential services for victims and their children
- \$42.9 million for providing shelter, services, and housing assistance for individuals and families who are victims or at risk of domestic abuse in their current living situations
- \$7.9 million for statewide sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE) programs for adults and adolescents in hospital settings and pediatric SANE programs in child advocacy centers
- \$2 million to expand services for survivors of human trafficking, including \$1 million through the Safe and Successful Youth program and \$1 million in a new appropriation in the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

Promoting Equality and Opportunity

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

- \$23.1 million to support higher education and career pathways for high school students in underserved communities through the Early College, Innovation Pathways, and Dual Enrollment programs
- \$4.8 million for the STEM Starter program across 15 community colleges
- \$4.5 million to support the YouthWorks Summer Jobs program
- \$5.9mMillion for Adult Basic Education (ABE)
- \$2.5 million for the Urban Agenda program
- \$1.9 million for the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund
- \$3.9 million for the Supplier Diversity Office (SDO)

Transportation

- \$1.512 billion in total budget transfers for the MBTA
- \$456 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
- \$94 million for Regional Transit Authorities
- \$11.6 million for the Merit Rating Board

Energy and the Environment

- \$4 million for the Summer Nights program, an increase of \$2.7 million (208%) versus FY22 funding
- \$30.5 million for the Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program, which will provide more than 27.4 million nutritious meals for individuals and families
- \$3.7 million for climate change and adaptation preparedness
- \$1.3 million to expand the Swim Safe Massachusetts program to enhance and promote water safety

Criminal Justice and Public Safety

- \$14.3 million to support for the 87th and 88th Massachusetts State Police Recruit Training Troops, which are expected to bring on 175 new troopers each

- \$78.3 million in total funding for re-entry and diversion programming across the Commonwealth, a \$42.6 million (120%) increase since 2015
- \$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
- \$8 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 is also provided for new appropriations supporting the Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Commission and four other commissions created in the Police Reform bill.

Securing and Modernizing Government IT

- \$164.1 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 access the Governor's filing letter, budget message, and specific account information [click here](#).

Massachusetts Gas Prices Not Falling as Fast as Elsewhere

Chris Lisinski

State House News Service

Gasoline prices in Massachusetts have been ticking downward over the last month, but the pace of change has been slower than the national average and Bay Staters continue to pay more at the pump than drivers in many other states.

The average price for a gallon of gasoline in Massachusetts is now \$3.38, AAA Massachusetts reported Monday. That's down 1 cent from the average price a week ago and 4 cents from the average price one month ago. Compared to last year, gas prices are still elevated, landing \$1.19 higher than the \$2.19 per gallon average price on Dec. 27, 2020, AAA Massachusetts said.

"Gasoline prices fluctuated over the past few days as fears of an omicron-driven economic slowdown were countered by news of a severe fire at a major oil refinery in Texas," said AAA Massachusetts Director of Public and Government Affairs Mary Maguire.

The state's average price is 10 cents higher than the national average of \$3.28 per gallon Monday, which itself is down 2 cents from last week and 11 cents from a month ago but still \$1.03 more than this time last year.

Massachusetts Gov. Baker's administration awards \$3.5 million for local technology infrastructure

Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito today announced \$3.5 million in grants to 70 municipalities through the Community Compact Cabinet Information Technology grant program. The Baker-Polito Administration has now issued 749 grants through this program worth \$19.2 million to help Massachusetts communities become more efficient and innovative while improving their technology infrastructure.

"Technology systems support so many of the critical services that Massachusetts cities, towns and school districts provide to residents," said Governor Charlie Baker. "We are proud that our Administration, through the work of the Community Compact Cabinet, is continuing its partnership with local communities to enable another round of innovative IT improvement projects."

"Since the beginning of the grant program, our collaboration with cities and towns across the Commonwealth has led to hundreds of transformative technology investments, from public safety systems upgrades to establishing online permitting," said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito. "As the Chair of the Community Compact Cabinet, I am pleased to announce and congratulate the 70 municipalities receiving awards in this year's round of grants."

Pittsfield will receive \$99,750 to build a downtown public Wi-Fi network in this round of funding – the third award that the city has received through the Community Compact IT Grant program in last five years. The city received \$95,000 in

Fiscal Year 2019 for the implementation of wireless infrastructure for internal and public use and \$40,000 in Fiscal Year 2017 for switching infrastructure to enable telephone system consolidation.

Other examples of Community Compact IT Grant program awards this year include:

- \$114,503 for East Longmeadow to bolster their cybersecurity infrastructure and improve disaster recovery capabilities
- \$100,000 for Plymouth to implement an online permitting system
- \$73,478 for Athol to implement network security across all town buildings
- \$60,000 for Hopkinton to implement a records management system
- \$48,615 for Revere for network systems integration
- \$25,000 for Leicester for cloud-based software for EMTs and paramedics

“We are proud to continue supporting a wide range of impactful IT initiatives that will undoubtedly improve the efficiency and reliability of government services,” said Administration and Finance Secretary Michael Heffernan. “We appreciate the continued commitment and partnership of our local community leaders in identifying and undertaking these projects to better serve their businesses, residents, and visitors.”

“The Baker-Polito Administration has long recognized the importance of modernizing the Commonwealth’s IT and cybersecurity infrastructure, as well as improving the constituent digital experience,” said Technology & Security Secretary Curt Wood. “Now, more than ever, it is essential that municipalities are able to deliver the critical services that government provides through a secure digital environment.”

The application period for the new Municipal Fiber Grant

program will run from March 15 to April 15, 2022. This competitive grant program through the Community Compact Cabinet is designed to support closing critical gaps that exist in municipal networks, which allows for the central management of IT infrastructure, improves cybersecurity, and can provide overall network cost savings.

About the Community Compact Cabinet

Formed in January 2015, the Community Compact Cabinet is chaired by Lt. Governor Polito and is composed of the Secretaries of Housing and Economic Development, Education, Transportation, Energy and Environmental Affairs, and Technology Services and Security, along with the Senior Deputy Commissioner of Local Services and the Assistant Secretary of Operational Services. The Community Compact Cabinet elevates the Administration's partnerships with cities and towns, and allows the Governor's Office to work more closely with leaders from all municipalities. The Cabinet champions municipal interests across all executive secretariats and agencies, and develops, in consultation with cities and towns, mutual standards and best practices for both the state and municipalities. The creation of Community Compacts creates clear standards, expectations and accountability for both partners.