

SUMMER 2019
PEISCH POST



State Representative
Alice Peisch
Wellesley • Weston • Wayland



14TH NORFOLK DISTRICT NEWS

SUMMER 2019

Dear Residents of the 14th Norfolk District:

As the summer months wind down, the first year of the 2019-2020 legislative session continues. I would like to take this opportunity to update you on the recent activities of the Massachusetts House of Representatives. So far this year, the House has passed several important bills including legislation to help cities and towns across Massachusetts fund infrastructure projects aimed at fighting climate change, as well as a bill authorizing \$200 million for Chapter 90 transportation funding to help municipalities complete transit and roadway improvement projects. The House also passed legislation addressing the public safety concerns of distracted driving, banning conversion therapy, and lifting the cap for families seeking access to transitional assistance. This newsletter includes further information about these bills and other legislation.

The Legislature also enacted, and Governor Baker signed, the state budget for Fiscal Year 2020. I am pleased to report that the budget substantially increases the state's investment in our students and schools, contributing to a record-setting \$5.17 billion allocated to Chapter 70 education funding. The FY20 budget also works to address the root causes of many of the challenges facing our residents, including substance abuse, homelessness, and unemployment by providing \$10 million in new funding for mental and behavioral health.

As House Chair of the Education Committee, a significant portion of my time has been spent working on legislation to implement the recommendations of the Foundation Budget Review Commission. That commission, which I co-chaired, proposed a number of updates to the public education funding formula, most of which have been enacted via the annual budget over the last few years. The legislation, which will codify the recommendations, will likely be released from committee and taken up by the House and Senate during the fall.

As a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, I am here to serve as your voice in state government. I appreciate all of you who have reached out to my office to let me know about the legislation you support and the issues that concern you. I encourage any resident who has questions or comments related to the state government to contact me by phone at (617) 722-2070, by e-mail at Alice.Peisch@mahouse.gov, or by mail at State House, Room 473G, Boston, MA 02133.

It remains an honor and a privilege to serve the residents of the 14th Norfolk District.

Very truly yours,

Alice Hanlon Peisch
State Representative

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Contact Info for Rep. Peisch:

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FISCAL YEAR 2020 BUDGET

On July 31st, Governor Baker signed the \$43.32 billion state budget for Fiscal Year 2020, which included historic levels of investment in critical areas such as education, health care, addressing the opioid epidemic, and protecting our most vulnerable citizens. The final budget also included an \$848 million deposit into the state’s stabilization (“rainy day”) fund, meaning that the fund is on track to hit \$3.3 billion by the end of FY20. This section of the newsletter provides highlights of only some of the many essential items that were funding in the FY20 budget. For more information or to read the entire FY20 budget, please visit www.malegislature.gov/Budget/FinalBudget.

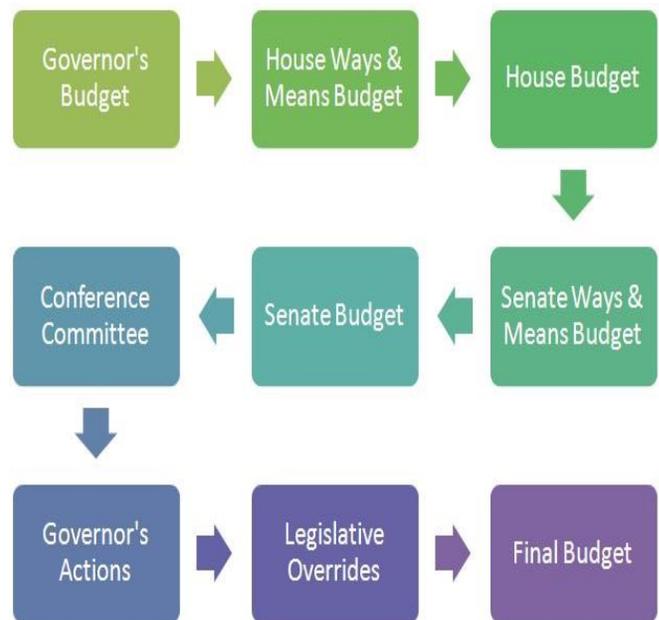
The Environment

While our federal government continues to shirk its responsibility in the areas of climate change, sustainability and environmental efforts, Massachusetts remains a national leader in shaping policy that will have a positive impact on our environment for generations to come. The FY20 budget has more than \$283 million that will be spent on environmental issues and programming, including:

- \$47.25 million for State Parks and Recreation;
- \$61 million for the Department of Environmental Protection;
- \$1.5 million for Watershed Protection;
- \$2.2 million for the implementation of strategies that address climate change mitigation and preparedness; and
- \$3.2 million for the administration and implementation of the MA Toxics Use Reduction Act.

How does the budget process work?

The Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts requires the Governor to submit a proposed budget for the next fiscal year to the House of Representatives by the 4th Wednesday of January. The House Committee on Ways and Means reviews this budget and then develops its own budget proposal, which is sent to the House of Representatives to be debated, amended, and voted on. Once passed, the House’s budget bill is then sent to the Senate. The Senate Committee on Ways and Means reviews the House’s budget bill and then develops its own budget proposal, which is sent to the Senate to be debated, amended, and voted on. The House and Senate budget bills are then sent to a joint Conference Committee, made up of three Representatives and three Senators, to negotiate the differences between the two versions. The Conference Committee’s consolidated budget bill is then returned first to the House and then to the Senate for a final vote. From there it is sent to the Governor to be reviewed and approved, or to make vetoes or amendments. Any amendments proposed by the Governor must be approved by both Chambers. If the Governor chooses to make any vetoes, the House and Senate may vote to override them with a two-thirds majority in each chamber. The final budget is known as the General Appropriation Act and consists of the Conference Committee’s version, minus any vetoes, plus any overrides and any amendments adopted by both the House and Senate.



FY20 Budget Continued...

Investing in Public Education

The FY20 budget reflects Massachusetts' continuing commitment to our students, teachers and school districts across the Commonwealth. The budget included a record high appropriation of \$5.17 billion for Chapter 70 aid, a \$268.4 million increase over the last fiscal year. This funding level provides a minimum \$30 per-student aid increase for all districts that would not otherwise receive increases under Chapter 70. The budget also supports a wide range of education programs and initiatives, including:

- **METCO:** An over \$2 million increase in funding for this essential program, bringing the total funding level to \$24.2 million;
- **Early Education & Care:** The budget funds the “early education rate reserve” account at \$20 million, providing an increase to reimbursement rates for subsidized early education and care with the goal of retaining high quality individuals in the workforce;
- **Special Education Circuit Breaker:** \$345,154,803 for the Special Education Circuit Breaker, which represents a \$25.81 million increase over FY19, an estimated 75% reimbursement rate;
- **Adult Basic Education:** The budget provides \$41,045,000 for the Adult Basic Education line item, which is a \$7.7 million increase over FY19. This funding shall be distributed through grants to a diverse network of organizations that have demonstrated commitment and effectiveness in providing Adult Basic Education services, including English as a Second language, basic literacy, and citizenship classes;
- **School-to-Career:** The FY20 budget provides \$5,462,047 for the Connecting Activities, an account that funds school-to-career programs that are designed to extend the classroom into the workplace by linking students with local employers to create applied learning opportunities through structured internships and career exploration activities; and
- **Homeless Student Transportation:** A \$2 million increase over FY19, the budget provides assistance to local districts that pay for the transportation of homeless students to school at a level of \$11.1 million.

LOCAL BUDGET FIGURES:

WESTON

- **Chapter 70:** \$3,949,220
- **Unrestricted government aid:** \$397,212

WELLESLEY

- **Chapter 70:** \$9,273,504
- **Unrestricted government aid:** \$1,375,608

WAYLAND

- **Chapter 70:** \$5,299,764
- **Unrestricted government aid:** \$959,875

FY20 Budget Continued...

ADDITIONAL BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

Jobs & Economic Development

- \$90.5 million for Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs);
- \$41 million for Adult Basic Education Services;
- \$7 million for the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund;
- \$2 million to establish a program to promote and support the Massachusetts restaurant industry;
- \$500,000 to establish a specialized prevailing wage and construction investigatory and enforcement unit within the Attorney General's office;
- \$16 million for summer jobs for at-risk youth; and
- \$4.8 million for the STEM Starter Academy, to support underperforming students at community colleges interested in pursuing STEM subjects.

Transportation & Infrastructure

- \$345,813,615 towards improvement to transportation and infrastructure improvements across the Commonwealth;
- \$125 million for the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority to design, construct, maintain, and operate our highways, bridges and tunnels, as well as to help municipalities with local projects in their communities.

Public Safety & Judiciary

- \$4.5 million for a new community-based re-entry program;
- \$24 million for civil legal aid to provide representation for low-income defendants;
- \$11 million for Shannon Grants, a competitive grant program to individual municipalities to address heightened levels of gang violence; and
- \$520,400 for a neighborhood-based gun and violent crime prevention pilot program working with out-of-school youth and young adults (17-24) intended to prevent gun violence and other violent crime in neighborhoods and municipalities with the highest rates of violent crime in the commonwealth.

Housing & Homelessness

- \$116 million for the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP);
- \$72 million for Public Housing Subsidies;
- \$8 million for Alternative Housing Voucher Program;
- \$53.4 million for Homeless individual shelters;
- Over \$6,000,000 million towards veteran's homelessness services; and
- \$2,000,000 for the Search Job Connect Program, helping homeless or previously homeless families receive employment support, job training and job search services.

2019 LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

Green Works

On July 24, 2019, the House of Representatives unanimously passed legislation investing \$1.3 billion to help cities and towns across the Commonwealth fund infrastructure projects aimed at fighting climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The bill establishes a \$1 billion, ten-year grant program (known as “GreenWorks”) to fund clean energy, energy efficiency, and climate change resiliency measures that cut greenhouse gas emissions, fortify infrastructure and reduce overall municipal costs. The bill also invests \$325 million in other municipal environmental projects. This bill builds on the House’s long-standing commitment to providing municipalities with the tools necessary to mitigate the short and long-term effects of climate change. By funding projects that improve preparedness and produce clean energy and sustainability programming, Massachusetts residents will be as equipped as possible to deal with the increasingly devastating effects of climate change. The MA Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs will accept applications annually and run the program, funded through the issuance of bonds. The bill is now pending in the Senate.

Title X

Earlier this year, Governor Baker signed into law a bill that provides \$8 million to women’s reproductive health organizations in Massachusetts to offset the loss of federal funding caused by the Trump Administration’s changes to the Title X program. The legislation enables women’s health and family practice organizations to continue their important work promoting access to healthcare throughout the Commonwealth.

Distracted Driving

On May 16, 2019, the House of Representatives passed legislation to ban drivers from using hand-held electronic devices in vehicles unless they are in hands-free mode. Distracted driving is a major factor in many dangerous and fatal motor vehicle accidents. This legislation will help protect drivers, passengers and pedestrians.

The legislation defines hands-free devices as those that engage in voice communication with and receiving audio without touching, holding or otherwise manually manipulating the device. Law enforcement officials have the ability to issue warnings to drivers until December 31, 2019 before the law goes into effect on January 1, 2020. The legislation also:

- Allows for drivers to use mapping or navigation devices if they are affixed to the windshield or integrated into the vehicle and only involve a tap or swipe;
- Exempts the use of electronics in the case of an emergency and for first responders if they are using the devices as part of their official duties;
- Penalizes drivers with fines of \$100 for the first offense, \$250 for the second offense, and \$500 for the third and subsequent offenses;
- Builds off and bolsters existing law by creating compliance measures, requires the inclusion of race on the uniform citation, and extends this practice to all jurisdictions; and
- Invests \$300,000 towards data collection and analysis by an outside entity.

The Senate passed a different version of the bill and a Conference Committee is currently working to resolve those differences prior to sending it to Governor Baker’s desk.

2019 Legislative Updates, continued...

Child Wellness Initiative

On July 31, 2019, the House of Representatives unanimously passed legislation supporting the health and wellness of children across the Commonwealth.

This bill is one part of a multi-tiered initiative to address the specific needs of children and adolescents in an integrated fashion. The House Children’s Wellness Initiative aims to break down silos of service to better address the complex health and wellness needs specific to the Commonwealth’s 1.4 million children. The effort seeks to make access to healthcare easier for the most vulnerable populations, eliminate barriers to care, and formulate data-driven recommendations to improve service delivery and system coordination. The initiative also supports a holistic approach that provides services early and often—ensuring that children grow to be healthier, happier, and more productive adults.

This specific bill, the first of the initiative, creates a foundation for better access to services and more data to inform future policy. Among the provisions contained in the bill is the requirement that the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families report to the Legislature on its efforts to improve the Commonwealth’s foster care system. The bill is now pending in the Senate.

Lifting the Cap

In April, the Legislature enacted, and Governor Baker signed into law, a bill lifting a decades-old family welfare cap (retroactively applied to Jan. 1, 2019). The cap limited access to Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (“TAFDC”) benefits to children born prior to the date the family first started receiving benefits. Lifting the cap will extend cash benefits to the 8,700 Massachusetts children and families who have previously been excluded due to the outdated policy. Therefore, children will no longer be denied \$100 a month in welfare benefits based on when they were conceived.

Banning Conversion Therapy

On April 8, 2019, Governor Baker signed a bill preventing healthcare professionals from engaging in “conversion therapy,” including practices that attempt to change an individual’s sexual orientation or gender identity. The legislation outlines and excludes from the ban counseling and healthcare practices designed to support an individual and facilitate coping. The law protects young, vulnerable members of the LGBTQ community, continuing Massachusetts’ long and proud tradition of enacting legislation that ensures the health, safety and welfare of children. It also continues our tradition of protecting LGBTQ youth and the civil rights of all residents in the Commonwealth.

DISTRICT NEWS

HEROES AMONG US



Weston resident **Nazda Alam** (*above*) was named a 2019 Unsung Heroine by the MA Commission on the Status of Women after being nominated by Rep. Peisch for her work increasing civic and electoral participation among Muslim and immigrant communities. Nazda is the founder of the Nazda Alam Foundation for Muslim Women Civic Engagement & Leadership in Weston and a social work with the MA Dept. of Children and Families.

Richard S. McGhee (*below*) of Wellesley was recognized for his commitment to public service by the Massachusetts Black & Latino Legislative Caucus at its “Black Excellence on the Hill” event last spring. Richard serves as an elected member of Wellesley Town Meeting, contributes to Wellesley’s cable station, and is a founding member of the Board of Directors of World of Wellesley, Inc. Richard’s long history of promoting diversity and helping his community made him a strong nominee for this honor.



EXCELLENCE IN ATHLETICS



Pictured on the **left** is the Wellesley Girls Ice Hockey Team, second consecutive year as Division 2 State Champions! Pictured **below** is the Wellesley High School Girls Track Team, winners of the All State Track & Field Meet for the second year in a row! Congratulations to our repeat champs!!

In addition to these wonderful champions, Weston’s Boys and Girls tennis teams won state championships. Wellesley had a Boys singles champion and Girls doubles championship in tennis. We are all very proud of our accomplished student-athletes. I look forward to hosting next year’s champs at the State House!



CONTACT REPRESENTATIVE PEISCH!

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Meet Representative Peisch's Staff:

Corey Testa, Staff Director:

Corey, who currently resides in Boston, grew up in Wellesley and is a 2006 graduate of Wellesley High School. Corey served as Rep. Peisch's Legislative Aide from 2011-2013 and is honored to be back serving as Staff Director. Corey graduated from Connecticut College in 2010 with a B.A. in Government, and graduated from Boston College Law School with his Juris Doctor in 2016. Corey can be reached at Corey.Testa@mahouse.gov.

Mary (Mollie) Cecconi, Legislative Director:

Mollie, who resides in Revere with her husband and three month old daughter, joined Representative Peisch's staff in July 2012, and currently serves as Legislative Director. She graduated from Emmanuel College in Boston with a bachelor's degree in Political Science and History, and graduated with a master's degree in Public Policy from the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth campus. Mollie can be reached at Mary.Cecconi@mahouse.gov.



Have you ever visited the State House?

Let us know if you would like to visit!

Contact Rep. Peisch's office at (617) 722-2070
or e-mail Mollie Cecconi at
Mary.Cecconi@mahouse.gov

Interested in taking a free tour of the State House?

Call Secretary of the Commonwealth Galvin's office at (617) 727-3676 or visit the website at
www.sec.state.ma.us

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on Weston Cable!*

Weston On The Hill

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Hear Rep. Alice Peisch speak about current and future legislation, as well as state and local issues that will come up on Beacon Hill.