



# *The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON, MA 02133-1054

**MICHELLE CICCOLO**  
**STATE REPRESENTATIVE**  
15<sup>TH</sup> MIDDLESEX DISTRICT

March 3rd, 2022

Aaron Michlewitz  
Chair, House Committee on Ways and Means  
State House, Room 243  
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chair Michlewitz:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me regarding my district's budget priorities for Fiscal Year 2023. Please find an abbreviated list of my requests below. A full description is included with this letter to give you a complete picture of each request.

#### District Specific Priorities

- 1. \$150,000 for the Town of Lexington to establish a pilot Transit Improvement District, H.3892**
- 2. \$75,000 for the Town of Lexington to establish a Low Noise, Low Emissions Landscape Equipment Grant Program to support small businesses in transitioning their equipment**
- 3. PFAS remediation in Woburn**

#### ARPA Funding Priorities

- 1. \$1,500,000 for a statewide Low Emissions, Low Noise Electric Landscape Equipment transition Grant Program, H.868**
- 2. \$200,000 for Lexington to create a 2-year pilot for a community based unarmed 911 mental health emergency response team, in light of the recent fatal police shooting of a mentally ill individual in Town.**

#### Statewide Program Priorities

- 1. Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE), H.3276 & Residential PACE, H.3275**
- 2. Zero Waste Caucus Priorities –Full letter from the Caucus to be sent later in March.**

#### General Statewide Budgetary Priorities

- A. METCO – Full Funding**
- B. ELM Green Budget – 1% of the state budget to support environmental agencies**
- C. Student Opportunity Act – Full Funding of SOA on original 6-year timeline**

Thank you for your leadership and consideration of my requests, and please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,



Michelle Ciccolo

First, I want to thank you and the House Ways and Means Committee for including funding for several of my priorities in the FY22 budget. Thanks to your inclusion of \$100,000 to support food access in Woburn, Lexington, and surrounding towns, as well as \$350,000 towards supporting youth mental health and suicide prevention efforts in Lexington and surrounding towns, we were able to help alleviate and prevent food insecurity and advance student mental health across the district. The \$50,000 for the 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution has helped the Town of Lexington get underway with its crucial planning efforts. I am truly grateful to you for your assistance in securing this funding!

District Specific Priorities:

**1. \$150,000 for the Town of Lexington to Pilot Transit Improvement Districts (TID)**

This session, I filed H.3892, a home rule petition which would grant Lexington the ability to create a pilot Transit Improvement District. This is an important incentive program that will help generate matching local and private funding to expand first mile / last mile transit options. Modeled from the Business Improvement Districts statute, this mechanism would allow cities and towns to work with the private sector and MassDOT to develop efficient transportation systems in their communities. Piloting this approach in Lexington would test the feasibility and benefits of TIDs, and help identify sticking points that could inform smoother program implementation in the future. Lexington has several commercial biotech areas seeing considerable new development and we need to be able to develop shuttle services to get workers to the jobs in these new destinations. The amount requested represents the state matching funds that would be required if a local TID were launched, with the private property owners paying a portion, and the municipality similarly paying into the effort. Thus, this funding would significantly leverage other public and private funds towards local transportation demand management and would be money well spent.

**2. \$75,000 for the Town of Lexington to Establish a Low-Noise, Low-Pollution Landscape Equipment Grant Program**

H.868 provides for a statewide grant program to assist private landscapers in transitioning from diesel / gas powered lawn equipment to electric. The many environmental and social equity benefits are detailed below in the ARPA funding section. Lexington has, however, already begun to phase out the harmful diesel/gas powered equipment and has recently passed a controversial warrant article resulting in a ban of leaf blowers 3 years from now. The matter has become contentious, and a ballot question has been placed on the local municipal ballot to see if the question will be allowed to stand. Residents are worried about the impacts on small businesses. This money would ease the financial burden of landscapers operating in Lexington (many of whom are BIPOC and exposed to hazardous pollution levels daily) who cannot afford to convert.

ARPA Funding Priorities:

**1. \$1,500,000 for Low Noise, Low Emissions “Quiet Communities” Municipal Grant Program**

I filed H.868 this session, which would require the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs to establish a grant program to provide incentive funds to cities and towns to transition municipal landscape maintenance machinery to low noise, low emissions equipment. It also encourages EOEEA to develop a zero-interest loan program for landscape companies. Unlike the automotive sector, which for years has had emissions standards and catalytic converters to reduce harmful emissions, small 2 and 4 stroke engines have not evolved and continue to emit unsafe chemicals. These chemicals include particulate matter, ozone-forming emissions (volatile organic compounds (VOCs) include benzene, 1,3 butadiene, formaldehyde, and acetaldehyde), and carbon monoxide. According to research done by the Massachusetts Non-profit, Quiet Communities, in 2018 Massachusetts emitted 563,000 Tons of CO2 from gas-powered lawn and garden equipment. Ozone emissions from this source were 9,666 tons, and particulate matter was approximately 491 tons in 2018. These engines also do irreparable damage to users' hearing and disrupt residential neighborhoods due to the noise they emit. Unfortunately, since landscape jobs tend to be held mainly by BIPOC and immigrants, these harmful impacts are concentrated in our most vulnerable communities. Transitioning these engines and tools to clean, quiet equipment is a matter of social justice, equity, and common sense. The new MassSAVE program appears that it will have some financial incentives for landscape equipment conversion but there is no program yet for cities and towns to convert their equipment and an appropriation of this magnitude would fund approximately 2 pieces of equipment per municipality in Massachusetts.

## **2. \$200,000 for Lexington to create a 2-year pilot for a community based unarmed 911 mental health emergency response team.**

Lexington would like to pilot this concept and asks for two years of funding which would roughly pay for an additional social worker and training of existing staff to serve on the crisis response team. Just two weeks ago, Lexington recently had an unfortunate fatal shooting of a mentally ill man at the hands of our local police. The community had already been exploring ways to de-escalate violent and dangerous situations and a community group called "Lexington Residents Reimagining Public Safety" was launched. This group, along with individual members of the Selectboard, have highlighted the need for more mental health programs and assistance along with the desire for better training for public safety personnel. This group has redoubled its calls for action in the wake of the recent shooting. As a community, we are particularly interested in the concepts expressed in the ACES Act, [H2519](#), which establishes a program to create "Alternatives for Community Emergency Services Grant Program (A.C.E.S.) to increase the availability of non-law-enforcement, unarmed community-based response options for calls to 911."

### **Statewide Program Priorities:**

#### **1. Residential and Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy Programs**

The current PACE program is run by MassDevelopment and therefore somewhat "off-budget," but it needs a language modification to create a residential program (R-PACE, H.3276) and a definitions update to allow new commercial construction to access the existing program (H.3275). Ideally, nominal funding would be provided for a program administrator out of DOER who can collaborate with MassDevelopment on the marketing and implementation of this program. I am talking with Chairman Roy about including PACE language in his upcoming climate bill.

#### **2. Zero Waste Caucus Priorities**

I want to thank you Mr. Chairman, for fully funding the DEP Administration line-item last year and ask you to do so again in this budget cycle. As Chair of the Zero Waste Caucus, I will be developing a further budget letter pertaining to solid waste and recycling to focus on how various Member's bills might have an impact on the state budget. I expect we will include an ask relative to mattress disposals which DEP admits it does not have full funding to address. The mattress waste ban goes into effect this November; the state is not ready for the associated costs of establishing a new mattress recycling program. In addition, I believe we will want to ask that the unclaimed deposit return funds (aka "escheats") be set aside in a dedicated fund for recycling and waste reduction, as it used to be. In recent years, those funds have been swept into the General Fund. However, with state revenues as solid as they are, this is an ideal time to return these funds for their intended purpose.

## **Statewide Budgetary Priorities**

### **A - METCO full funding**

As you know, the METCO program has a proven record of success and has had a deeply meaningful impact in my district, specifically in Lexington. Segregation is a major driver of educational inequality, and our schools are more segregated now than they have been since the 1950s. The METCO program exists in order to mitigate this persistent trend. Students who are educated in diverse environments build critical thinking and problem-solving skills while developing cross-racial friendships. METCO is a national model for school desegregation, helping to ensure that students from Boston have access to top-notch schools while increasing diversity in the surrounding suburban school districts.

### **B. Green Budget – 1% of the state budget to support environmental agencies**

Thanks to your leadership, funding for the Commonwealth's environmental agencies increased last year, and I would ask that you and the House Ways and Means Committee continue to adopt the recommendations from the "Green Budget" as put out by the Environmental League of Massachusetts. Thank you again for your efforts to secure this funding even as the budget was in a state of uncertainty!

### **C. Student Opportunity Act – Full Funding**

While the pandemic delayed the first year of implementation of SOA funding, I was thrilled that the Legislature resisted the Governor's effort to stretch out the implementation of the SOA to seven years. I am grateful to the leadership in the House which instead accelerated the funding over the remaining six years, and I ask that you maintain that schedule going forward.