



THE GENERAL COURT OF MASSACHUSETTS
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1053

June 22nd, 2021

The Honorable Michael J. Rodrigues
Chair, Senate Ways and Means
State House, Room 212
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Aaron M. Michlewitz
Chair, House Ways and Means
State House, Room 243
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Cindy F. Friedman
Vice Chair, Senate Ways and Means
State House, Room 208
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Ann-Margaret Ferrante
Vice Chair, House Ways and Means
State House, Room 42
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Patrick O'Connor
State House, Room 419
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Todd M. Smola
State House, Room 124
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Members of the Conference Committee:

As Co-Chairs of the Criminal Justice Reform Caucus, we are writing to express our support for the favorable outcomes of the following FY22 Budget items. These priorities will fund critical criminal justice reform infrastructure in the Commonwealth and set Massachusetts on track towards rehabilitative and transformative change. We ask that you include the following programs in your final report:

Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (0321-1600): Include \$35,000,000 for the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC), in order to provide legal representation for indigent or otherwise disadvantaged residents of the Commonwealth facing critical non-criminal legal issues so that they will have access to legal information, advice, and representation.

Prisoners' Legal Services (0321-2100): Include \$2,358,482 for Prisoners' Legal Services (PLS). PLS provides civil legal assistance to people who are incarcerated in Massachusetts state prisons (Department of Correction facilities) or in county jails or houses of correction. With focuses on health and mental health care, guard-on-prisoner violence, physical conditions of confinement, and segregation and isolation, PLS promotes the safe, humane, and lawful treatment of Massachusetts prisoners through civil rights litigation, administrative advocacy, client counseling, and outreach to policy makers and the public.

Committee for Public Counsel Services: Include the following investments for the Committee for Public Counsel Services (CPCS), which will provide legal representation for residents of the Commonwealth who are unable to afford an attorney in all matters in which the law requires the appointment of counsel:

- **(0321-1500):** Include \$73,844,843, as adopted in the Senate Budget.
- **(0321-1510):** Include \$168,000,000, as adopted in the Senate Budget.

- **(0321-1520):** Include \$23,365,014, as adopted in the House and Senate Budgets.

Office of the Child Advocate (0930-0100): Include \$4,214,443, as adopted in the Senate Budget, for the operation of the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) to ensure effective cross-agency coordination of early childhood and school-aged student wellness efforts to address barriers to student academic success, including, but not limited to, access to social services, mental health and behavioral health resources. This line item also includes provisions for a pilot program to provide housing support services to transition age youth that are aging out of the care or custody of DCF or DYS.

Implementation of Recommendations by the Council of State Governments Justice Center-Massachusetts Criminal Justice Review (0330-0613): Include \$7,962,500, as adopted in the Senate Budget, to implement recommendations set forth by the Council, including:

- The establishment of new programs and expansion of existing programs targeted at recidivism reduction.
- The establishment of EOPSS-administered program grants to support the expansion of evidence-based cognitive behavioral programs in county houses of correction and jails.
- Improve collaboration between DOC and the parole board to reduce delays in the release of paroled inmates.
- Develop a transitional youth early intervention probation pilot program.
- Develop and implement a behavioral health strategy, including statewide capacity to track the utilization of behavioral health care services and behavioral health outcomes for persons in the criminal justice system within the Medicaid management information system.

Implementing Mandated Reforms to Mental and Behavioral Health Treatment Related to DOC (8900-0003): Level fund \$4,803,797 for the purpose of implementing mandated reforms to mental and behavioral health and residential treatment related to DOC.

Community Empowerment and Reinvestment Grant Program (7002-2021): Include \$7,500,000 to a community empowerment and reinvestment grant program to be administered by EOHED for the purpose of developing, strengthening and investing in communities that are disproportionately impacted by the criminal justice system, where a high percentage of individuals' incomes fall below 250% of the federal poverty level, and with a large population of socially and economically disadvantaged and historically underrepresented groups.

Community-Based Residential Re-entry Programs (0339-1011): Include \$9,640,888 for a grant program to be administered by the Office of the Commissioner of Probation for community-based residential re-entry programs to reduce recidivism by providing transitional housing, workforce development and case management to individuals returning to the community from county correctional facilities and state prisons, including inmates of state prisons and county correctional facilities and individuals on parole or on probation.

Additionally, we also encourage favorable outcomes for the following outside sections:

Justice Reinvestment Workforce Development Fund (Section 200000): This outside section, which was filed by Sen. Chang-Diaz and adopted in the Senate Budget, will create a Justice Reinvestment Workforce Development Fund that shall use the savings generated by lower incarceration rates to reinvest in communities that are disproportionately impacted by incarceration. Reinvestments will prioritize transitional employment programs, social enterprise, pre-apprenticeship, school-based or community-based high school dropout prevention and re-engagement programs, cooperative and small business development programs, and community-based workforce development programs. The fund may give

priority to programs that include access to housing stabilization services, addiction treatment and trauma-informed mental health care as relevant to the fund's mission. The fund will be administered by a 13-member board of directors. Not more than \$10,000,000 will be transferred, subject to appropriation, to the fund annually.

Spending Accountability on Federal ICE Programs (Section 125): This outside section, which was also filed by Sen. Chang-Diaz and adopted in the Senate Budget, would require the sheriff's offices in each county and the DOC to file a report with the House and Senate Clerks' offices and the House and Senate Ways and Means committees including the costs, revenues, and reimbursements associated with any agreement made pursuant to 8 U.S.C. 1357(g), intergovernmental service agreement for housing federal detainees, and the performance of those functions for FY18 through FY21 before December 1, 2021. Beginning on October 1, 2021, the sheriff's offices in each county shall file additional reports no later than 15 days after the last day of each quarter.

We greatly appreciate your consideration of the Criminal Justice Reform Caucus' budget priorities and your support for these essential programs and services. Please do not hesitate to contact either of our offices with any questions.

Sincerely,



James B. Eldridge
State Senator
Middlesex & Worcester District



Mary S. Keefe
State Representative
15th Worcester District