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Senate Passes Fiscal Year 2019 Supplemental Budget
*The Senate proposal eliminates the 'Cap on Kids' and includes
\$30M for the Low Income Heating Energy Assistance Program*

(Boston) The Massachusetts State Senate today passed a supplemental budget for Fiscal Year 2019 of \$143.9 million in spending to address deficiencies, as well as policy and spending items that are time sensitive in nature. The proposal is \$21.4 million less than what Governor Baker originally proposed in January.

Furthering the Senate's continued commitment to support working families and those in need, the Senate's proposed supplemental budget eliminates the so-called 'Cap on Kids' and includes \$30 million for the Low Income Heating Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), among other considerations.

When asked for comment on the budget's passing, Senator Gobi had this to say: "In addition to the necessary funding, I am proud that we were able to actively assist farmers in the process. With its passage the growing of hemp for industrial products can now be done on APR land, opening opportunities for more diversity in a growing market space."

"The children and families of our Commonwealth deserve our support, particularly when they are in need, and so I am proud that the Senate has acted once again to do away with the outdated and ineffective 'Cap on Kids,'" stated **Senate President Karen E. Spilka (D-Ashland)**. "I'd like to thank Chair Rodrigues for moving this supplemental budget forward, which takes important steps to care for our residents while being fiscally responsible."

The Massachusetts 'Cap on Kids' policy was established in 1995 and was designed to discourage welfare clients from having additional children while receiving aid by excluding additional children from the calculation of benefits. The Senate's supplemental budget repeals this discriminatory policy, and an amendment adopted on the floor makes the repeal retroactive to January 1, 2019. Upon implementation, those 8,700 children who are, or would be, excluded from grant calculations will now be included, resulting in higher monthly benefits for their families. The fiscal year 2019 budget already provides funding for this change, which was included in the House and Senate conference committee report but vetoed by the governor.

This year, Massachusetts received a 7.6% cut in its federal fuel assistance (LIHEAP) allocation, which had already dropped from \$200 million to \$136 million in recent years. In response to this shortfall in federal funding, the Senate proposes to provide an immediate state allocation of \$30 million to the LIHEAP program. This will help over 40,000 vulnerable low-income households—including low-income families with children, seniors and veterans—stay warm through the winter. Eligibility for LIHEAP is based on household size and the annual income of every adult household member, and it provides assistance for electric and gas utility bills and other heat sources including oil and propane.

Building on the commitments of last session's criminal justice reform, the Senate's supplemental budget also includes \$16 million for sexual assault evidence kit testing by the State Police Crime Lab to end the backlog of untested rape kits.

The Senate's proposal also includes \$1 million to the Massachusetts Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) and Pediatric SANE Programs. These programs provide trauma-informed, expert forensic nursing care to sexual assault patients, including children, across the state.

The proposed supplemental budget for Fiscal Year 2019 also includes:

- \$39M for collective bargaining agreements;
- \$28.1M for the Department of Correction for a new medical vendor contract and CARE Act implementation;
- \$16.5M for the Health Information Technology Trust Fund;
- \$10M to fund emergency assistance shelters;
- \$1.5M for Gas Infrastructure Evaluation;
- \$680K for the Contingency Contract retained revenue account;
- \$495K for the Sex Offender Registry Board;
- \$438K for the DCAMM Rents retained revenue account; and
- \$230K for the Department of Labor Standards.

In addition, the supplemental budget also includes a number of legislative fixes to address the administration and implementation of paid family leave and the expansion of the room occupancy excise to apply to short-term rentals, as well as allowing for permits to grant the growing of hemp on Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) land.

The supplemental budget will also allow the Committee for Public Counsel Services (CPCS) to declare an emergency related to care and protection cases in a county and authorizes CPCS to temporarily raise the rates for new assignments by not more than \$75 per hour. It also waives the annual cap on billable hours, up to 2,000 hours until July 1, 2020.

The Senate's Fiscal Year 2019 supplemental budget will now be reconciled with the House's version, which was passed last week.

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