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**Senate Passes ENDURE Act to Provide Relief and to Small Businesses,  
Support for Workers, and Investments in Infrastructure**

*Bill authorizes \$455 million to provide relief to communities and stimulate economic development  
in an effort to combat devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic*

(BOSTON-07/30/2020) The Massachusetts State Senate passed a sweeping economic recovery and development bill on Wednesday that provides much-needed support to businesses, invests in infrastructure, and creates new jobs in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

*An Act to encourage new development and usher in a recovering economy (ENDURE Act) includes provisions for small business competitive grant programs, housing production, local economic development projects, capital funding for vocational schools and community colleges, and investments in infrastructure. It also provides support for the tourism and cultural sectors and restaurant industry. Further, to promote equity and protect borrowers and workers across the Commonwealth, the ENDURE Act establishes a Future of Work Commission and creates a Student Loan Bill of Rights.*

“This ENDURE Act passed today includes several measures that will bolster the ability of our communities to continue to make improvements and adapt to the new challenges they face and those they may meet in the future,” commented **Senator Anne Gobi (D-Spencer)**. “I am grateful for the work of my colleagues in the funding areas that have been prioritized here, and thankful that we moved to adopt the amendments related to crumbling foundations, the Veterans and Warriors Agriculture Program, and the Mill Revitalization Task Force. While there is still work to be done in these areas, this represents a strong step towards remediation in several areas of the state that are in need of assistance.”

“The ENDURE Act will provide a much-needed boost to our economy as it recovers from the dire effects of COVID-19,” stated **Senate President Karen E. Spilka (D-Ashland)**. “In crafting this bill, the Senate recognized the need to be bold when addressing the challenges facing restaurant and small business owners, the clean energy sector, cultural attractions and other key sectors that keep our economy humming. I am particularly pleased this bill includes the long sought-after housing production reforms that the Senate has supported for years. I want to thank Senators Lesser, Rodrigues and my colleagues for their attention to this critical bill and for acting with urgency to move it forward in the legislative process.”

The legislation also includes new protections for entrepreneurs by enforcing a ban on making bad faith assertions of patent infringement, a practice known as ‘patent trolling.’ Such claims often entangle new small businesses in costly lawsuits that hamper the companies’ productivity and sap their early seed-stage funds.

To invest in the Commonwealth’s infrastructure and stimulate economic activity, the ENDURE Act authorizes bonding for the following:

- \$15M for the site readiness program;
- \$35M for a Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation matching grant program to community development financial institutions for small business loans and grants;
- \$5M for the Massachusetts Broadband Incentive Fund;
- \$10M for the expansion of the Massachusetts Manufacturing Innovation Initiative (M2I2)
- \$50M for the Technology Research and Development and Innovation Fund;
- \$20M for rural community development and infrastructure grants;
- \$20M for a Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation small business grant program;
- \$20M for financial and capital assistance grants to restaurants impacted by the 2019 novel coronavirus;
- \$10M for grants to promote marketing and advertising for in-state cultural and tourist activities during the 2019 novel coronavirus reopening process;
- \$40M for a program to redevelop blighted buildings;
- \$10M for regional and community assistance planning grants;
- \$28M for an Employment Social Enterprise Capital Grant Program;
- \$50M for local economic development projects;
- \$2M for an urban agriculture grant program;
- \$20M for grants to support the reopening of cultural facilities impacted by the 2019 novel coronavirus;
- \$25M for transit-oriented housing developments;
- \$10M for climate-resilient affordable housing developments;
- \$50M for the neighborhood stabilization program;
- \$5M for Gateway Cities market rate housing pilot program;
- \$15M for vocational technical school expansion grants; and
- \$15M for community college high-demand workforce grants.

The ENDURE Act creates a robust commission to look at the ‘Future of Work’ and examine ways to ensure sustainable jobs, fair benefits and workplace safety standards for all workers in all industries.

It also gives greater protections to student loan borrowers in disputes with companies servicing their loans, requiring servicers to apply for licenses from the state, which the Commissioner of Banks could revoke if the servicer is engaged in abusive practices such as overcharging students or steering them into costlier

repayment plans to make higher profits. Student loan servicers that break state licensing requirements or take advantage of students could be fined and forced to repay student borrowers under the bill.

Further, the ENDURE Act:

- Addresses the critical need for housing by enabling municipalities through a simple majority to address building opportunities through zoning reform;
- Authorizes an additional 2800 megawatts of offshore wind development;
- Extends the state and local permits held by a real estate developer unable to proceed with the project due to COVID-19 disruptions for one year;
- Allows farmer brewers and farmer distillers to sell, and provide samples of, their alcoholic beverages at agricultural events and farmers markets;
- Extends protections for cranberry growers under c.61A out to 2023;
- Mandates equitable opportunities in state contracts by expanding an affirmative marketing program that elevates hiring firms owned by women and people of color;
- Reduces onerous and unnecessary regulations for hair braiders;
- Excludes forgiven PPP loans from Massachusetts taxable income for the purposes of personal income taxes; and
- Enables MassDevelopment to better deploy its resources and tools under the TDI program.

Senator Gobi was able to successfully advocate for three amendments during the Senate session Thursday. This included an amendment funding the Massachusetts Veterans and Warrior to Agriculture Program, a program dedicated to enhancing the education, training and employment of veterans working or aspiring to work in the field of agriculture. A second of Gobi's amendments targeted the crumbling foundation issue that is plaguing south-central Massachusetts, with thousands of homes potentially at risk of failure due to the presence of a rare mineral, pyrrhotite, in the foundation's concrete aggregate. Her amendment extends the radius of the foundation testing program from 20 to 50-miles from the impacted quarry, and directs all new and perspective quarries to test for the rare iron-sulfide before their aggregate may be able available for sale.

The third amendment successfully advocated for in the bill by Senator Gobi authorized the development of an industrial mill building task force to study the re-development, rehabilitation and revitalization of industrial mill buildings in the Commonwealth.

The final version of this bill will now be negotiated by the House and Senate before going to the governor's desk for his consideration.

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