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PRESS RELEASE

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Regional School Caucus Co-Chairs Anne Gobi and Kim Ferguson Announce Funding for Regional School Transportation in FY16 Budget

BOSTON – The Massachusetts House of Representatives and Senate voted today to pass a \$38.1 billion spending bill for the 2016 Fiscal Year. Included in the bill is an increase in funding for regional school transportation reimbursements to towns. With the help of Senator Gobi's amendment the funding was increased to \$59,021,000 and was the final number approved by the budget conference committee. As co-chairs of the Regional Schools Caucus, Senator Anne M. Gobi (D-Spencer) and Representative Kimberly N. Ferguson (R-Holden) were stalwart advocates for these funds.

"In Massachusetts, there are 85 regional school districts. I represent 11 of them," said Sen. Gobi during her maiden speech during Senate debate. "There originally was a promise they would be 100 percent funded. Do you know how many times that has been done? None. We have a chance in this budget to right a wrong by adding \$2.5 million to the budget."

"Senator Gobi and I have worked tirelessly to ensure that the concerns of our regional school districts are heard and I would like to thank the other legislators who have supported this effort. Our districts need every dollar of funding they can get, and this will help offset the high cost of regional school transportation."

Regional school transportation funding in the FY15 budget was cut dramatically by Governor Patrick's 9C cuts earlier this year. The final budget funds the program at 73 percent of the full funding.

Sen. Gobi and Rep. Ferguson worked with the Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools to advocate for the funding and have long defended the program which is essential to their respective districts. They recently shared their support of Governor Baker's decision to restore \$5 million to the regional school transportation account after the \$18.7 million cut Deval Patrick's administration implemented last year. When the \$18.7 million was cut from the regional school transportation account in November 2014, Senator Gobi and

Representative Ferguson joined over 60 of their colleagues in sending a letter to Attorney General Maura Healy regarding the legality of the funding cut under the 2010 law, An Act relative to the Achievement Gap.

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