


MEMORANDUM

TO: Chairperson and Members
Boston School Committee

FROM: Carol R. Johnson
Superintendent 

John P. McDonough
Chief Financial Officer

DATE: February 4, 2009

RE: FY2010 Preliminary Budget Recommendation: \$786,883,901

We present to the School Committee tonight a preliminary budget recommendation in the amount of \$786,883,901. This represents a 5.5% decrease from our current appropriation of \$833.1 million.

The current economic climate presents enormous challenges to our nation, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the City of Boston, and the Boston Public Schools. Declining resources to our City require all of us – including every central support office and every school – to identify significant reductions for next year.

No matter the economic circumstance, we remain firmly committed to achieving our core mission of providing every child with a first-rate public education.

We have a **strong academic agenda** in place – including ambitious student achievement **goals and targets** through 2012 – designed to **close achievement gaps** and ensure that every student graduates from high school prepared to complete college and secure a good job.

The academic agenda includes building on what works, as well as making investments in new

strategies, including:

- An ambitious citywide approach to K-12 literacy instruction, to ensure every child learns to read and write well;
- Expansion of challenging learning opportunities – especially Advanced Placement courses – in every Boston high school and increasing access to algebra in every middle school;
- Dropout prevention and recovery initiatives, such as credit recovery programs and a new Transition Center to welcome back students who have dropped out;
- A Newcomers Academy for students with little or no English who arrive in the country during the school year;
- Enrichment opportunities to develop well-rounded students with a range of academic and non-academic skills and interests;
- Expansion of K-8 schools and high-performing pilot schools, in response to parental demand;
- Investment in early childhood education including expansion of pre-kindergarten classrooms.

We *can* and *will* realize this vision of **every student achieving excellence**. To do so, however, we must be prepared to make difficult choices, and all of us must be prepared to work differently to ensure that the needs of students come first.

FY2010 Fiscal Context

The current economic crisis has been compared to challenges that our country faced during the Great Depression and at the end of World War II. Neither the State, the City, nor the Boston Public Schools are immune from this crisis. While all levels of government are taking positive steps to respond, it is clear that it will take time, economic discipline, and rethinking how we do business over the long term in order to ride out this crisis.

The Boston Public Schools has responded to early warnings of economic decline.

- Last year we implemented an aggressive Spending Control Plan to meet the challenges of long-term trends of declining enrollment and reductions in federal funding in order to balance our budget. With the assistance of the Mayor and the City Council's approval of a supplemental appropriation, we ended our eighteenth consecutive year on budget.
- The current year's budget was submitted with a one-time investment from City reserves of \$10 million and reductions in our spending plan of close to \$19 million, largely from central support services.
- At the same time, we began the process of looking at excess capacity in our schools for the number of students that we serve. This resulted in *Pathways to Excellence*, a plan that resulted in the decision to close six schools and merge or expand existing schools to provide expanded K-8 structures and high-performing pilot schools.
- Early in this school year, in response to the national decline in the economy and in anticipation of potential mid-year reductions in revenue, we introduced another Spending Control Plan that froze all non-classroom vacancies and introduced tight controls on spending from non-salary accounts. We anticipate that through these measures we will end this year on budget.

Federal

At the federal level, Congress approved an initial \$700 billion stimulus package that largely focused on stabilizing financial institutions. More recently, with the election of President Obama, the House has passed and the Senate is now considering an **Economic Recovery Plan** valued in excess of \$850 billion. This holds both promise and opportunity for jump-starting the economy and includes substantial investments in support of education. We are working with the Council of the Great City Schools and through the Mayor's Office of Intergovernmental Relations to ensure that the final plan maximizes funding for public education. With promise, however, there is also caution. Before we can count any money from this plan, the following issues must be resolved:

- Prioritizing “shovel-ready” projects
- Timing of when funds may be available
- Flexibility that school districts may or may not have in the use of funds
- Rules governing supplanting of federal funds and whether exemptions will be granted for these specific funds
- Whether funds will flow directly to school districts and municipalities or through state governments and what state guidelines will be established
- Clarity on eligibility for certain funds

In addition, we are operating under the assumption that these funds will be non-recurring. As a result, we have not assumed any major funding from the Economic Recovery Plan to support our FY2010 proposal. Further, we recognize the importance of being very strategic in the use of these funds to make investments that have a shelf life beyond the resources, to drive the student performance agenda, and to provide short-term relief from reductions in funding levels.

For federal funding outside the Economic Recovery Plan, we have assumed level funding for entitlement grants, and no funding for competitive grants that are not part of a multi-year funding commitment.

State Funding and Chapter 70

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has worked to close an estimated \$2.4 billion gap for FY2009. This has resulted in recent so-called “9C” adjustments, or mid-year decreases in appropriations including significant reductions in local aid.

The Governor recently submitted his FY2010 budget proposal. This proposal included recommendations for even steeper reductions in state aid. The City of Boston estimates that these reductions will cause a budgetary gap between expected revenues and the cost of services in the range of \$140 million.

At the same time, both the mid-year cuts and the FY2010 budget proposal have recognized a higher priority for Chapter 70, state aid to support public education. In both instances, Chapter 70 has been held harmless. This means that Boston's share of Chapter 70 funds, if approved at proposed levels, remains at approximately \$221.4 million.

While this is good news, it does not mean that the Boston Public Schools is immune from reductions in funding. Here's why:

In the current year, Boston receives \$221.4 million in Chapter 70 funding. The net reduction due to charter school tuitions and reimbursements is approximately \$45.9 million. This leaves \$175.5 million to support Boston Public Schools. This represents about 21% of our current appropriation. The other 79% is funded through other sources of city revenue, primarily the property tax and other sources of state aid. Since other sources of state aid are being dramatically cut, our current appropriation level cannot be supported.

In addition, if the cost of charter schools increases, even level funding of Chapter 70 would result in a decrease of support for Boston Public Schools. This could occur through increased tuition rates or growth in charter school enrollment.

Other significant sources of state funding not in Chapter 70 include targeted grants such as "circuit breaker" funding for students with disabilities, Expanded Learning Time, Kindergarten Expansion and MCAS support. We have assumed a 10% reduction for these and other state grants, unless specifically informed otherwise by program directors. We have assumed that competitive grants will not be funded.

City of Boston

The City of Boston relies on a variety of revenue sources to support operations. The two largest sources are the property tax (56%) and state aid (21%). Property taxes are expected to continue to grow. State aid is expected to be reduced. Other sources of revenue (Licenses & Permits, Excise Taxes, and Interest) are sensitive to the economy and, as a result, are also expected to decline in FY2010.

At this point, the City is projecting increased costs, including Boston Public Schools, at a level of approximately \$150 million. At the same time, it is estimating net gains in revenue of approximately \$10 million, resulting in a budgetary gap between revenues and expenditures of \$140 million. Within this context, and based on current estimates, this budget recommendation is based on an appropriation of \$786.9 million, representing a 5.5% reduction from our current appropriation level.

Boston Public Schools

The parameters for developing the future year budget are driven by an assessment of future year costs and the revenues that are available to support it. For the general fund budget, revenues are represented by the target appropriation.

For the Boston Public Schools, the gap between expected revenue and the future year costs for maintaining the same level of services next year as are provided this year (level service budget) is \$107.7 million. This is summarized below.

FY2010 Budget Gap

FY09 Budget	833,105,384
FY10 Increased Cost	61,427,849
FY10 Level Service Budget	894,533,233
Target Appropriation	786,883,901
Budget Gap	107,649,332

The gap is made up of two components: **increased costs** and **decreased revenues**. A summary of increased costs is as follows:

FY10 Increased Costs

Wages:	
Collective Bargaining	21,506,708
Step Increases	10,069,601
Other Salary	8,207,404
Employee Benefits	6,510,136
Subtotal Salary and Benefits	46,293,849
Transportation	685,807
Utilities	317,502
Food Services	3,064,478
SPED Private Placement Tuitions	1,792,569
Non-recurring revenue to support General	
Fund operations	9,273,644
	61,427,849

Some have asked questions regarding the relationship of this budget gap to the \$140 million budget gap estimated for the City. The following should be noted:

- The \$61.4 million in additional costs are included in the City’s \$140 million gap. This represents 44% of the City gap and is consistent with the Boston Public Schools’ current share of departmental appropriations.
- The decrease in appropriation of \$46.2 million represents 33% of the City’s \$140 million gap. This is consistent with the Boston Public Schools’ approximate share of the total City budget (34%).

FY2010 Budget - Preserving Core Services: Classroom Teaching

Approach

In these difficult financial times, the Boston Public Schools has prioritized its resources based on the following principles:

- Preserve resources for direct classroom instruction
- Work smarter and more efficiently

Central Support Budgets

The Boston Public Schools has worked to identify opportunities to operate more efficiently and effectively in our central operations. Changes include a new energy efficiency initiative, consolidations of central departments, changes to the transportation program, and redesigning models of service delivery.

We have invested in a light bulb replacement program that increases energy efficiency and reduces the district's utilities bills. Using more energy-efficient light bulbs will yield \$3 million in savings in FY10. We have also taken advantage of lower natural gas costs. By locking in the price, we will save \$1.5 million in FY10.

The Boston Public Schools has taken steps to reduce duplication of services within central offices. The proposed consolidations not only save money, but also will help improve the quality of services delivered to schools. Examples of organizational consolidations pursued in FY10 include:

- Curriculum & Instruction and Professional Development
- Strategic Planning and Facilities Management
- Textbook Purchasing and BPS Purchasing
- Accounts Payable functions in Business Services and Food & Nutrition Services

In addition, we continue to pursue a wide range of collaborations with the City, including a joint collaboration between City MIS and Boston Public Schools' Office of Instructional and Information Technology that generates operational efficiencies.

Boston Public Schools plans to reduce spending on transportation by nearly \$5 million in FY10 through several changes in program placement and some reductions in services. We have eliminated routes through school reprogramming, reduced the amount of cross-zone special education transportation and locked in low gas prices. We are instituting a new RSVP process for parents who drive their children to school to indicate that they no longer need transportation services. We also are proposing the difficult recommendation to stop busing students to private and parochial schools and to stop providing MBTA passes at no cost to private and parochial students. FY10 transportation savings are detailed in the following table:

Transportation Savings	FY10 Savings (\$ thousands)
Pathways	953
Reduced cross zone SPED assignments	450
SPED Door-to-Door	293
Citywide eligibility	50
Fewer school bus stops	600
Fuel price lock in	400
Defer DOJ/First Student settlement	650
Private/parochial school transportation	1,100
Private/parochial MBTA passes (grades 6-12)	302
Total Transportation Savings	4,798

The Boston Public Schools has also invited third-party experts to review our Special Education (SPED) and English Language Learners (ELL) programs so we can redesign our service delivery models and ensure that our current practices are consistent with best practices. The Council of the Great City Schools has just completed its review of Special Education Services in Boston, and we look forward to its findings and recommendations. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will conduct its Consolidated Program Review of Special Education Services in March. Our ELL model redesign will respond to requirements for higher levels of direct service. Because we need to address these areas system-wide, Special Education and English Language Learner resources were excluded from reductions in school budgets.

The changes that the Boston Public Schools has made in central offices have had a large impact on budgets and staffing. These have not been easy decisions. All central departments have taken significant reductions, with some departments exceeding 30% reductions from their current budgets. Below is a list of the proposed reductions to date in central offices and their impact on positions:

Proposed Reductions to Non-School Budget Allocations

Category	Amount (\$)	FTE
Central and Programmatic Support		
Operations	16,278,489	81.50
Finance	2,774,893	5.00
Academics	8,009,546	73.10
Family & Student Engagement	364,030	4.00
Superintendent's Offices	1,191,925	12.00
District Programs and Services	14,879,906	9.00
Special Education Central	2,961,954	33.90
Total Central and Programmatic Support	46,460,743	218.50

Included in this table are some difficult decisions we made regarding the level of district support in a number of programmatic areas. We can no longer afford the level of investment that has been made over the past two years in Superintendent’s Schools. While we recognize the value of extended days, additional professional development time, and additional support services, initial results do not provide sufficient evidence to warrant the investment, and replication is not possible given the expense. Reducing these services results in approximately \$7.2 million in savings.

Some services have been scaled back to reflect a significantly reduced workforce. Efforts to recruit and retain teachers will continue, but at a level that is more consistent with the needs of the district in this environment.

Principals, Headmasters and all management employees are covered by the wage freeze. The \$1.3 million in savings achieved through this wage freeze minimizes further reductions at the school level.

School Budgets

The cost savings achieved through reductions in central office support helped reduce the gap from \$108 million to \$61 million. Given the size of the remaining deficit, we had no choice but to seek reductions from schools for next year.

School Budget Methodology

Boston Public Schools has learned from prior experience that cutting schools’ budgets without regard to size, level, or population is harmful to schools. As a result, since FY2005 we have made adjustments to school budgets that recognize these differences. For more details about how school budgets were allocated, see the note in the Appendix.

School Budget Reductions

The following table shows that schools have saved approximately \$36 million and made significant reductions in positions:

Category	Amount (\$)	FTE
School Budgets	30,636,441	627.80
Special Education School Reductions	5,893,750	71.10
Total School-Based Reductions	36,530,191	698.90

School Budget Impact

What does the reduction in FY10 school budget allocations mean in terms of real cuts?

- Budget-to-budget comparison: Schools received FY10 allocations that were on average 4% lower than FY09 budgets.

- Level service comparison: Given the increased costs of doing business, the reduction in school allocations averages about 8% lower than current budgets.

Principals and Headmasters, in consultation with their school site councils, have made tough choices in their budgets. School leaders have chosen to reduce support functions first and teachers as a last resort. Unfortunately, the depth of the financial crisis has meant that balanced budgets will require teacher layoffs. Below is a table that outlines FY10 school-based FTE reductions:

FY10 School-Based FTE Reductions

Non-Teaching Staff	FTE
School Support	142.6
Student Support	87.2
School-based Administrators	42.8
Special Education Support	23.3
Total Non-Teaching Staff	295.9
Teaching Staff	FTE
Regular Education Teachers	331.9
Special Education Teachers	40.5
Special Education Paras	30.6
Total Teaching Staff	403.0
Total School-Based FTE Reductions	698.9

Principals and Headmasters have made FTE reductions unique to their schools’ needs and staffing level. Principals at some elementary schools have decreased the number of lunch monitors and teaching specialists (physical education teachers, music teachers, etc.). Principals at some middle schools have reduced administrative staff, the number guidance counselors, and/or the number of teaching specialists. Headmasters at large high schools have seen the largest reduction in administrative support and teaching positions.

Remaining Strategies

As a school district, we are moving aggressively to find every last efficiency to reduce the impact on schools. The proposed reductions from central offices and schools total \$83 million, still leaving a gap of \$24.6 million. Difficult choices are ahead of us. We need to recognize that scarce resources must be focused on the classroom and we must challenge long-held beliefs of how we structure our services, assign our students, and compensate our employees. We will continue to solicit feedback from schools, families, and other stakeholders. There are three areas that need to be considered during the balance of this process:

- Wage Freeze
- Transportation and Student Assignment

- School Closings

Wage Freeze

As we continue to seek additional savings, we realize that we cannot close the deficit alone. A spirit of shared sacrifice is needed.

To that end, Boston Public Schools leadership recognizes that before we ask for any sacrifice on behalf of our unions, we must first be willing to sacrifice ourselves. Recognizing the impending financial crisis, members of the Senior Executive Team received no pay increase *last year*. Responding to the Mayor's call in his State of the City address, we will receive no pay increase *this year as well*. I join with the Mayor in calling on the twelve Boston Public Schools collective bargaining units to accept a one-year delay in salary increases for the sake of the children and the families whom we serve.

A one-year delay in salary increases by all twelve collective bargaining groups would save \$29.4 million in FY10. That is the equivalent of 335 teachers and 70 additional staff. A one-year delay in salary increases would close the deficit and enable the Boston Public Schools to begin to reinvest in schools. It would reduce the impact of layoffs on provisional teachers. And it would help maintain and build on the academic gains we have achieved. We value the dedicated employees of our school communities and know they are having a positive impact on our work. We hope that all our employee groups will join with us in supporting the Mayor's wage freeze request.

The alternative to the wage freeze is finding other ways to close the \$24.6 million deficit. These options are described below.

Transportation and Student Assignment

We must take a hard look at all spending that does not directly support **classroom instruction** and focus on student achievement. Keeping the current business model is financially unsustainable. We cannot succeed on our academic goals unless we think differently about how we provide services to schools.

We can no longer afford to spend more than \$70 million on yellow bus transportation, particularly when those costs require us to lay off good teachers. The Mayor, the School Committee, and the Superintendent are committed to addressing the transportation budget head-on and to proposing bold solutions on behalf of the children of Boston.

A new approach to transportation is not a matter of having or not having school choice. We are committed to giving all families a range of options for their children's education. But we must ask ourselves, "How much choice is *enough* choice?" Above all, the foremost priority must be ensuring high-quality schools across the board, in every community of the city, where families are proud and excited to enroll.

A new approach to student assignment would seek to achieve the following objectives:

- Create walkable communities
- Provide continuity of educational experience
- Preserve a range of school choice
- Reduce transportation costs

To meet the current academic and fiscal challenges, particularly related to escalating costs of yellow bus transportation, we must position the district **now** to have the resources to invest in quality educational programs in every community. While we continue to support school choice, we want to maximize opportunities for the community to support and work with families – and also have more resources to invest in ways that guarantee families a quality education.

We believe that shifting to a **five-zone** student assignment/choice plan will allow us to ensure quality school choices in every community and create the flexibility we need to examine school start times and make sure there is a range of high-quality options for every family (traditional, pilot, two-way bilingual, K-8, early childhood centers, etc.) Mayor Menino has directed the schools, community centers, libraries, and parks and recreation departments to find new and less-fragmented ways to work together so there is a seamless system of support from students' early years through graduation.

We recognize the need to have broad community feedback and examine how to best implement any of these changes in ways that benefit – and do not disrupt – current student enrollments. We have much more research to conduct to ensure that a five-zone plan meets the goals I have outlined above. Tonight marks a starting point in that discussion, not the end, and we will schedule additional opportunities for our families, students, and stakeholders to comment on this proposal in the coming weeks.

School Closings

We will not succeed in providing every student access to music, arts, and the full menu of academic experiences necessary for closing the achievement gap, reaching academic proficiency, and ensuring that every student is college-ready when our resources are spread too thin. Even after the gains that have been made through *Pathways to Excellence*, there remain too many seats in our schools for too few children.

Additional schools closings must be considered in order to close this gap. We will consider student performance, family choice, equitable access, and the condition of facilities in preparing options.

Finally, ongoing review and greater clarity regarding opportunities available through the Economic Recovery Plan will be incorporated into our planning. There should be no illusion, however, that federal recovery funds will solve the problem.

Next Steps

Many concerned parents, students, and community partners have asked how they can help address the budget crisis. There are three primary ways:

- Support the Mayor's legislative agenda to provide additional revenue to the City (attached)
- Advocate for flexibility in the Economic Recovery Plan
- Support the wage freeze

This is the beginning of the public phase of our budget development process for FY2010. There is much work that needs to be done before we reach a final budget. We welcome your interest, ideas, questions, and suggestions. Budget hearings are scheduled on the following dates:

- Thursday, February 5, 2009 at the Blackstone Elementary School (6:00 p.m.), 380 Shawmut Ave., Boston
- Tuesday, February 10, 2009 at John McCormack Middle School (6:00 p.m.), 315 Mt. Vernon St., Dorchester
- Tuesday, March 10, 2009 at English High School (6:00 p.m.), 144 McBride St., Jamaica Plain
- Wednesday, March 11, 2009 at 26 Court Street (5:00 p.m.)

A budget workbook that presents both line item and programmatic detail will be made available to the School Committee and the public later this month. The School Committee is required to take action on the FY2010 budget by Wednesday, March 25, 2009.

This budget recommendation represents the Boston Public Schools' financial plan to meet our educational goals. We know that for FY2010 and the long term, we must continue to align our resources and identify tradeoffs that will enable us to fund the educational priorities that go to the heart of our mission: effective teaching and learning and improved student achievement.

Attachments: Budget summary
School budget methodology
FY 2010 budget by account
Mayor's legislative agenda

Boston Public Schools
FY10 Budget Development Process
Summary as of 02/03/09

	<u>Amount (\$)</u>
FY09 Budget	833,105,384
FY10 Increased Cost	<u>61,427,849</u>
FY10 Level Service Budget	894,533,233
Target Appropriation	<u>786,883,901</u>
Budget Gap	<u><u>107,649,332</u></u>

Proposed Reductions

	<u>Amount (\$)</u>	<u>FTE</u>
Central and Programmatic Support		
Operations	16,278,489	81.50
Finance	2,774,893	5.00
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Superintendent's Offices	1,191,925	12.00
District Programs and Services	14,879,906	9.00
Special Education Central	<u>2,961,954</u>	<u>33.90</u>
Total Non-School Reductions	46,460,743	218.50
Special Education Schools	5,893,750	71.10
School Budgets	<u>30,636,441</u>	<u>627.80</u>
Total School-Based Reductions	36,530,191	698.90
Total Proposed Reductions	<u>82,990,934</u>	<u>917.40</u>
Revised Budget Gap	<u><u>24,658,398</u></u>	

Appendix

School Budget Methodology

Boston Public Schools has learned from prior experience that cutting schools' budgets without regard to size, level or population is harmful to schools. As a result, since FY2005 we have made adjustments to school budgets that recognize these differences.

Adjustments to FY10 school allocations vary based on three factors:

1. Size of school: very small, small, large
2. Level of school: elementary, middle, high
3. Needs of students in a school: students with disabilities and English Language Learners

No reductions were made to so-called "special schools" that serve only students with disabilities (McKinley, Carter, and Horace Mann School for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing).

The level of cuts that schools have sustained since FY2007 is reflected in the table below in the column marked "Existing %." These are not new cuts; instead, they are the result of state funding not being restored to FY2003 levels.

The additional reductions to school budgets in FY10 are listed in the table below in the column marked "Additional %."

Level	# of Schools	Size	Enrollment	Existing %	Additional %	Cumulative %
Special	4	NA	NA	0.0	0.0	0.0
Elementary	16	Very Small	< 200	5.0	1.0	6.0
Elementary	44	Small	< 450	5.0	11.0	16.0
Elementary	23	Large	> 450	6.0	12.0	18.0
Middle	5	Small	< 500	7.5	13.0	20.5
Middle	7	Large	> 500	8.5	14.0	22.5
High	29	Small	< 450	9.0	15.0	24.0
High	10	Large	> 450	9.5	16.0	25.5

Note that K-8 schools are treated as elementary schools.

The adjustment factor is **not** applied to the total school budget. Those resources that support students with disabilities and English Language Learners are treated separately in school budgets and excluded from the adjustment factor. So the effective rate of the cut is lower than the "Cumulative %."

Revenue Related Legislation

An Act to Fulfill the Promise of Home Rule - To fulfill the promise of the Massachusetts Constitution's grant of home rule, this special act ensures that the city of Boston may exercise powers of local self government that are as strong as those of any municipality in the nation.

An Act Relative to the Taxation of Telecommunications Companies - This bill would amend 3 sections of the real estate tax statute to remove special tax exemptions for telephone/internet companies.

An Act Relative to a Local Options Meals Tax - This bill would allow municipalities the option of imposing a local excise tax on sale of prepared food and beverages of up to 2%.

An Act Relative to the Taxation of Public Land Used for Commercial Purposes on MBTA Property - The bill would remove the exempt status of property for commercial purposes on MBTA land.

An Act Permitting Cities and Towns to Impose an Excise on the Use of Off-Street Parking Facilities - This is a common fee imposed in most every major city. EPA parking restrictions in Boston limit supply and increase the price artificially.

An Act Relative to the Storage Fee for Towing - This bill would attempt to increase the storage fee for all towed vehicles, resulting in an increase of up to \$5.00 per tow. Currently BTM charges a maximum of \$15.00 per day, and the Dept. of Telecommunications and Energy (DTE) allows a maximum of \$20.00 per day. This is a companion piece to the towing fee change made in 2003.

An Act to Authorize Cameras to Capture Traffic Violations - This law authorizes cameras to capture vehicles that disregard traffic control signals and blocking intersections.

Extend State Exemption from DEP Fees to Municipalities - This bill would exempt municipalities and municipal authorities from Department of Environmental Protection compliance fees. Boston and other municipalities currently must pay fines and fees for failure to meet DEP timelines on contaminated properties acquired by the City through tax title foreclosure. This is a disincentive to responsible municipal action. The state currently exempts its own agencies from these fees.

An Act Making Certain Changes to Insurance for Persons in the Service of Counties, Cities, Towns, and Districts, and their Dependents - Bill would allow municipalities to seek the same authority the state has under Ch.32A, which allows the GIC to purchase health plans and undertake plan design. Currently cities and towns must follow Ch.32B (and any health benefit plan change must be approved by the unions).

An Act Relative to Substance Addiction Treatment - Alcohol purchased for off-site consumption is currently exempt from the 5% MA sales tax, along with necessities such as food and clothing. This bill would remove the exemption of this product and would dedicate the revenue to a Substance Abuse Health Protection Fund to provide substance abuse treatment; prevention education in schools, workplaces, and the community; and substance abuse related public service advertising.

An Act to Enable Health Safety Net Reimbursement for EMS - This bill enables public emergency medical services in Boston to be eligible for reimbursement by the Health Safety Net Trust Fund.

Amend Reimbursement Rates for Special Education - Currently, the circuit-breaker program uses a complex formula to reimburse local school districts for some out-of-district tuition costs for special education. This proposal would increase the circuit-breaker reimbursement to allow the program to keep pace with the cost of services provided.