

2021 Hanover Town Meeting

Thank you, Mr. Moderator, members of the Board of Selectmen, Town Meeting members and other elected officials for giving me this opportunity to speak with you and to provide you with an update on the Fiscal Year 2022 state budget.

Before I begin, I would just like to say that it is truly an honor for me to represent the residents of Hanover and the Fifth Plymouth District as your State Representative. You have my word that I will continue to do everything in my power to advocate for the needs of the town as your representative on Beacon Hill.

I am sure there are many people who want to speak on tonight's agenda, so I will try to be brief with my remarks.

As you know, the state budget process, like so many other things, was completely thrown off last year due to the emergence of COVID-19 and the fiscal uncertainty it created.

Because of this uncertainty, we were unable to have a state budget in place by the start of the fiscal year on July 1, and instead had to pass a series of interim budgets until the final budget was signed into law on December 11, 2020.

This year, I am happy to report that we are back on track for a more traditional budget timeline.

Just last week, the House of Representatives engrossed a \$47.7 billion state budget for Fiscal Year 2022 after three days of debate on over 1,150 budget amendments.

The House budget provides over \$7.3 billion in local aid for our cities and towns, including \$5.5 billion in Chapter 70 education aid.

The Chapter 70 number represents a statewide increase of \$219.6 million over current funding levels, and is enough to fully fund the first year of the Student Opportunity Act, which had been delayed for one year due to the coronavirus.

The original plan was to implement the Student Opportunity Act over a seven-year period, but the House budget envisions full implementation within six years, so the original timetable can be met.

I am happy to report that under the House proposal, Hanover is scheduled to receive a total of \$7,100,319 in Chapter 70 aid. This represents an increase of \$76,440 over the current fiscal year.

Hanover is also scheduled to receive a total of \$2,328,164 in Unrestricted General Government Aid to help fund other essential municipal services, which is an increase of \$78,730 over current spending levels.

Statewide, Unrestricted General Government Aid is being increased by \$39.5 million, for a total of \$1.168 billion.

I also want to highlight some other items included in the House budget that will provide additional education support for our cities and towns.

The Special Education Circuit Breaker is funded at \$368.1 million. This includes \$500,000 set aside for school districts in which special education costs exceed 25 per cent of the total district costs and in which tuition and other circuit-breaker eligible costs for placements at an approved private school located within the district exceed both \$1 million and 25 per cent of all tuition and other circuit-breaker eligible costs for placements at approved private schools.

The House budget also funds charter school reimbursements at \$154.6 million; regional school transportation at \$82.2 million; and homeless student transportation at \$14.5 million.

To help address some of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the House budget provides an additional \$40 million to help schools maintain funding despite enrollment losses, as well as \$15 million to support summer education, mental health and socialization services for students.

I am also happy to report that I was successful in securing \$25,000 for the Hanover Cultural Council as an amendment to the House budget. This money will be used to provide planning and assistance for Hanover Day. I will be working closely with my Senate colleagues to see that this money is retained in the final budget.

I also filed an amendment requesting \$40,000 to assist with the dismantling of the municipal windmill. Unfortunately, I was not able to get the funding at this time, but I will continue to work on the town's behalf to try to identify potential state funding sources to help offset these costs.

The budget process is still a couple months away from being completed, so the figures I have cited tonight are still preliminary. The Senate is expected to take up its version of the budget the week of May 24, and then both branches will need to reconcile the differences in Conference Committee. I will be more than happy to provide you with updates on the status of this funding as the budget process moves forward.

Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to provide you with this budget update. Please know that my office is always open to you, and I am only a phone call away by dialing 617-722-2430.

Thank you.