



## MASSACHUSETTS STATE BUDGET PROCESS AND TIMELINE<sup>1</sup>

The state budget is typically the most important piece of legislation passed by the Massachusetts Legislature each year. It determines how much money will be invested in many of One Family's priorities, including state funding for the One Family Scholars program, funding for homelessness prevention tools such as [RAFT](#) rental assistance and [MRVP](#) housing vouchers, and funding for public higher education. Much of our advocacy focuses on seeking strong investments for these and other priorities in the state budget. With the exception of funding for the One Family Scholars program, this work is done in collaboration with our [advocacy partners](#).

### September through December<sup>\*</sup>

- All state agencies prepare their respective budget plans and submit them to the Governor's Executive Office for Administration and Finance ("A&F," or "ANF") for review.

### January

- The Governor is required by law to submit his or her budget proposal to the House of Representatives by the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday in January or, if he or she has just been elected to their first term or a new term, within five weeks of that day.
- The Governor's budget proposal is designated "House 1" (H.1) in the first year of a legislative session (odd-numbered years) or "House 2" (H.2) in the second year of the session (even-numbered years). **House 1/House 2 includes *recommended* funding levels and language for the "[line item](#)" for each program or benefit. For example, the Governor's proposed funding level and language for RAFT rental assistance is in line item number 7004-9316.**
- The Governor's budget is non-binding and gives the legislature and the public an indication of the Governor's spending priorities. When the House and Senate craft their own versions of the state budget, they are not obligated to adopt the funding levels in the Governor's budget.
- **At this stage of the budget process, it is essential for advocates to urge their state representatives and state senators to include One Family's budget priorities in their own priorities list that they share with the Chair of the House or Senate Ways and Means Committee.**
- If we are successful in getting the requested budget figure included in the initial House budget or the initial Senate budget, it eliminates the need to push for budget amendments later, which can be a difficult step.

### February and March

- State representatives convey their state budget priorities to the Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, and state senators convey their priorities to the Chair of the Senate Ways and Means Committee.
- **Continue reaching out to state representatives and state senators.**

### April

- The House Ways and Means Committee presents its version of the state budget to the full House where it is amended and passed. Advocacy groups typically arrange for their legislative champions in the House to introduce amendments seeking to a) increase funding for particular state benefits and programs, and/or b) change the wording of a line item to bring about a policy change. Sometimes a budget amendment is adopted. The key decisions on budget amendments do not take place on the House floor, but rather behind closed doors. The key decision-makers are the [Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee](#), and the [Speaker of the House](#). However, other state representatives play an important role in lobbying legislative

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<sup>1</sup> Rev. 12/6/2022. This document includes some material from a budget process summary created by the Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education.

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When a new Governor takes office, this step does not take place until after the Governor is sworn into office.

leaders to support specific budget amendments. **At this stage of the budget process, it is critical for advocates to reach out to their state representatives, to urge them to a) co-sponsor budget amendments for line items related to preventing family homelessness and family self-sufficiency, and b) advocate for those budget amendments.**

## May

- The Senate Ways and Means Committee presents its budget to the full Senate where it is amended and passed. Advocacy groups typically arrange for their legislative champions in the Senate to introduce amendments seeking to a) increase funding for particular state benefits and programs, and/or b) change the wording of a line item to bring about a policy change. Sometimes a budget amendment is adopted. Similar to the way the process works in the House, the key decisions on budget amendments take place behind closed doors, with the [Senate Ways and Means Chair](#) and the [Senate President](#) the key decision-makers, and advocacy by individual state senators playing an important role. **At this stage of the budget process, it is critical for advocates to reach out to their state senators, to urge them to a) co-sponsor budget amendments for line items related to preventing family homelessness and family self-sufficiency, and b) advocate for those budget amendments.**

## June

- A budget Conference Committee is formed to negotiate the differences between the House and Senate versions of the state budget. These negotiations are done in private.
- Three members of each chamber are appointed to the conference committee – the Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, the Chair of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, the Vice Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, the Vice Chair of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, one state representative from the minority party (in Massachusetts, the Republican Party), and one state senator from the minority party.
- **At this stage of the process, it is critical for advocates to reach out to both their state representative and their state senator, to ask them to weigh in with House and Senate leadership in support of either the House version or the Senate version of the funding level and language for key budget line items, where there are differences between the House and Senate versions.**
- Over a period of weeks – and typically stretching into July – the Conference Committee reconciles the differences between the House and Senate versions of the budget behind closed doors, and one single budget is then presented to both the House and the Senate for a vote.
- The House and Senate always adopt the budget as written by the Conference Committee, without any changes. After the House and Senate pass the budget released by the Conference Committee, it goes to the Governor for his or her review and signature.
- The Governor has 10 days to review the budget. He or she has line item veto authority – they can veto an entire line item, reduce the dollar amount in a line item, and/or strike budget language, including [“earmarks”](#) for particular programs. The Governor cannot add additional money to a line item.
- Both the House and Senate need a majority of at least 2/3 to override any of the Governor's vetoes.

## July

- The new fiscal year begins on July 1<sup>st</sup>. For example, Fiscal Year 2024 (“FY24”) begins on 7/1/2023. If a budget for the fiscal year has not been passed by the legislature by this date – which is typically the case in Massachusetts – the two branches agree on a temporary funding measure to allow state government to operate, while the Conference Committee continues to iron out the differences between the House’s version and the Senate’s version of the state budget.