

# MassSenate

## Fiscal Year 2025 Closeout Supplemental Budget

S.2655

### Fact Sheet & Highlights

The Fiscal Year 2025 closeout supplemental budget allows the Commonwealth to responsibly ensure the programs and services residents rely on are adequately funded through the close of Fiscal Year 2025. It also advances policy proposals that establish fiscal oversight of county sheriffs' departments, allow the families of former residents of state institutions access to their records, and ensure continued access to universal free community college through the *MassEducate* program.

The details of the legislation are below.

#### **Restoring Public Confidence and Instituting Responsible Controls for Sheriffs' Offices**

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***Creates the Sheriff Fiscal Oversight Council.*** Ensures that county sheriffs engage in responsible spending practices by subjecting their finances to a Sheriff Fiscal Oversight Council. The Council is tasked with reviewing revenues and expenses on a monthly basis and is empowered to set financial management metrics to ensure the fiscal and operational integrity of sheriffs' operations. The Council will be chaired by the secretaries of the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security and the Executive Office for Administration and Finance and includes other appointees with expertise in state finance and the operation of correctional facilities from the Governor.

***Investigates FY2025 Spending in Excess of Appropriation.*** Directs the Inspector General to investigate county sheriffs' Fiscal Year 2025 spending and their compliance with the state finance law in 2025. The report, due by June 30, 2026, also analyzes funds spent by sheriffs on programs that fall outside of their statutory duties. A majority of the sheriffs' deficiency for Fiscal Year 2025 will be held until after the Inspector General's report is complete.

#### **Recognizing Residents' Dignity with Open Records**

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***Shines Transparency on State Institutions.*** Allows access to residents' patient records from more than 25 state-run institutions, many of them now closed, for individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities or mental health conditions. The records must be at least 75 years old and access would be subject to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Establishes a presumption in favor of disclosing records to immediate family or academic researchers if 50 years have passed since the resident's death. The goal of this proposal is to restore dignity to former patients and their families and increase transparency.

***Strikes Archaic Laws.*** Repeals archaic laws that allowed state institutions to hand over residents' unclaimed bodies to local medical schools for use as cadavers.

#### **Protecting Stipends for Community College Students**

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***Maintains Financial Aid Commitments.*** Sets up the Public Higher Education Student Support Fund to maintain financial aid benefits for students of public colleges and universities. Ensures that stipends designed to support students—such as the *MassEducate* program's stipend covering books and supplies—as well as other forms of financial aid remain fully funded.

## Closing the Books on Fiscal Year 2025

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**Responsibly Honors the Commonwealth's Commitments.** The legislation closes the books on Fiscal Year 2025 with a total bottom line of \$2.3 billion, which results in \$795 million in net spending of state resources after accounting for revenue from federal reimbursements. The supplemental funding includes:

- **\$12 million** to support the universal meals program for schoolchildren;
- **\$12.5 million** to cover no-cost phone call communications for incarcerated people;
- **\$14 million** to aid people in treatment for substance use and alcohol addiction through Section 35 programs;
- **\$2.04 billion** for MassHealth (with a net cost to the state of only \$539 million after reimbursements) covering the rapidly rising cost of providing healthcare;
- **\$18.5 million** to support public health hospitals;
- **\$10 million** to fund technology enhancements at the Department of Transitional Assistance, with the aim of forestalling harmful federal cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP);
- **\$18.3 million** to strengthen student financial aid assistance;
- **\$5 million** in direct supports for reproductive health care;
- **\$75 million** for the Housing Preservation and Stabilization Trust Fund, which supports affordable rental housing in Massachusetts; and
- **\$60.7 million** for MassDOT's snow and ice removal expenses.

**Makes Targeted Public Policy Updates.** The legislation includes several additional policy sections, including the following provisions:

- **Splits from Federal Vaccine Standards.** Gives the state greater flexibility in determining childhood vaccine schedules. Decouples the state definition of 'routine childhood immunizations' from the federal Vaccines for Children Program and from recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices of the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- **Punishes the Impersonation of a Federal Agent.** Criminalizes the impersonation of a federal officer. Increases the penalties for impersonating a public official, including impersonation of a federal officer, to a \$1,000 fine and up to 2.5 years in prison.
- **Strengthens Fishing Violation Penalties.** Allows the Massachusetts Environmental Police to charge by the pound—or charge the total value of the catch up to \$10,000—when imposing fines for fishing violations.
- **Helps Implement Multistate Nurse Licensure.** Facilitates fingerprint-based background checks for the multistate Nurse Licensure Compact that Massachusetts entered into through the 2024 economic development law.
- **Strengthens the Health Safety Net.** Updates the hospital assessment and increases funds for the Health Safety Net, subject to federal approval.
- **Respects Privacy of People Seeking Name Changes.** Removes the automatic requirement of a public legal notice for name-change petitions, instead allowing the court to require public notice in a particular case for good cause.
- **Updates State Police Injury Compensation.** Updates state police compensation for life-altering injuries to focus on the manner of an attack on an officer rather than the design of the weapon used in the attack.
- **Facilitates Broadband-Related Work.** Allows municipalities to pay utility companies' estimates for work to prepare utility poles, rights of way, and other infrastructure for broadband projects.
- **Institutes New CBAs.** Ratifies seven collective bargaining agreements for public employees.