

Education PROMISE Act

*Lead Sponsors: Sen. Sonia Chang-Díaz and Reps. Aaron Vega & Mary Keefe
SD101 / HD434*

THE PROBLEM: Every day, students across Massachusetts walk into schools that are facing dire challenges. Over the last decade, school districts have been forced to make difficult cuts year after year. **Classrooms across the state have lost critical services and programs**, including social-emotional supports like counselors, wrap-around services, resources like technology and books, professional development, arts classes, and preschool programs.

On top of these cuts, **Massachusetts has one of the worst achievement gaps in the United States between rich and poor students.**

It wasn't supposed to be this way.

In 1993, Massachusetts created the "Foundation Budget" with a promise to ensure all school districts could provide their students with a quality education. Unfortunately, that original formula underestimated key needs and in the 25+ years since, we have done little to other aging provisions – preventing schools from providing children the education they need to succeed.



The 2015 Foundation Budget Review Commission (FBRC) found that the original formula fell drastically short on the resources necessary to close achievement gaps for low-income students and English Language Learners. The FBRC also found that health care and special education costs have surpassed assumptions built into the original formula. **In all, the bipartisan commission of experts found that Massachusetts is underestimating the cost of education by \$1-2 billion every year.**

THE SOLUTION: Fix the formula to more accurately and equitably distribute resources – giving all schools the funding they need to deliver high-quality, 21st century education.

The PROMISE Act will set a multi-year phase in of the FBRC recommendations, including:

- **Realistically accounting for districts' health care costs** by using actual averages from the Group Insurance Commission to set insurance costs and inflation rates in the Foundation Budget.
- **Modernizing the ELL and low-income components** to provide critical services as identified by national research on best practices, examples provided by other states, and practices highlighted by leading districts here in Massachusetts.
- **Accurately projecting special education costs** by increasing the assumed in-district SPED enrollment rate to 16% and increasing the out-of-district cost rate to reflect the total costs that districts bear before the SPED "circuit breaker" is triggered.
- **Establishing a Data Advisory Task Force** to improve our use of school-level data to better inform future policy decisions and ensure funding is reaching the intended populations.
- **Fixing funding glitches and preventing phase-in inequity.** Corrects current undercounting of poverty by providing districts with the option to manually count their low-income students rather than rely on flawed data matching. Additionally, ensures that all students in district public school receive their promised aid from the state after accounting for charter tuition factors. Also ensures low-income, health care, and minimum aid provisions are all implemented at the same pace, so no district gets left behind.