

Highlights from the Massachusetts ARPA spending bill

COVID-19 relief dollars affecting the health of
MetroWest residents

Organized by Program Title

MLAC COVID Costs

- \$5m to MA Legal Assistance Corporation for programs over FY 2022, 2023, and 2024. Funds can be expended for “a Medical Legal Partnership Program” for low-income residents

Homeownership Assistance

- \$65m for down payment assistance programs, mortgage insurance and interest subsidy programs administered by Mass Housing Partnership and Mass Housing Finance Agency, and first-time homebuyer counseling programs and financial literacy programs in general, “to address a systemic homeownership gap that contributed to more severe impacts of the 2019 novel coronavirus pandemic in socially disadvantaged communities and among targeted populations”

Commonwealth Builders Program (production of for-sale, below market housing) - \$115m total

Rental Housing Production - \$115m total

Supportive Housing (for special populations – chronically homeless, survivors of sexual violence, foster care, etc.) - \$150m total

- These categories support the production of housing or conversion of existing spaces (hotels, nursing facilities) while encouraging clean energy practices and equipment
- All with language to prioritize residents of disproportionately impacted communities
- A portion of supportive housing dollars can be used for planning and building medical or health & wellness facilities in existing supportive affordable housing communities

Public Housing Maintenance

- \$150m “For a reserve to rehabilitate and modernize state-aided public housing developments through the funding of infrastructure improvements”; prioritizing communities disproportionately impacted by the pandemic

Local & Regional Public Health

- DPH should grant the funds in a way that “prioritizes the expansion and enhancement of shared public health services among 1 or more municipalities”
- \$98.95m for standardized and unified data systems for data related to the public’s health, including hardware, software, and training for local public health performance and a credential tracking system
- \$30m for training & education of local board of health and health department staff, including offering financial assistance for meeting education and credentialing standards from the report by the [Special Commission on Local and Regional Public Health](#)

- \$71.15m for direct funding and technical assistance, particularly in communities with large populations of socially & economically disadvantaged individuals
- \$100k for a study by the Health Policy Commission

Behavioral Health Workforce & Infrastructure Supports

- \$198.65m for Behavioral Health Trust Fund for loan repayment assistance, enhancing existing programs (money is further carved out for specific professions – most are for highly educated positions, but some is for bachelor’s level professionals). Funding shall prioritize recruitment and retention of “a culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse workforce”
- \$10m for grants for “a program of assertive community treatment”, of which \$5m is for folks under age 22 with severe needs. Funding here shall be distributed statewide with at least one grant in each of EOHHS’ six regions
- \$11.6m for a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner fellowship program “to recruit and retain [such roles] at community health centers”, and reporting should describe efforts to diversify the field
- \$15m to “establish and expand pre-arrest, co-response programs”, requiring police departments and mental health clinicians to work together. Dollars shall be provided in the form of matching funds to municipalities
 - Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) should prioritize municipalities that “submit a strategy to utilize evidence based and evidence-informed approaches to divert individuals from jail”
- \$5m for an online portal related to sharing real-time data of ER boarding for mental health and behavioral health patients of all ages, including a search feature for beds by “care level, licensing authority, age restrictions, and geographic location”
- \$2.5m for a data warehouse to help folks navigate the system of care and find providers
- \$5m for a culturally competent, linguistically diverse public awareness campaign about available behavioral health services
- \$5m for public colleges to address mental health needs of students
- \$5m for a “county restoration center in Middlesex County” for folks with mental health and/or substance use needs to divert them to appropriate care, and to provide assistance with startup costs (which are not already covered by other funds) for opening new treatment beds in 2022/3
- \$15m for primary care workforce development at community health centers (development, recruitment, retention)
- \$500m for William James College to develop behavioral health workforce development center
- \$750m to families with children with serious mental health needs
- Some additional funding set aside for pediatric behavioral health program implementation
- \$7m for a federally qualified health center and 24/7 emergency facility to address urgent behavioral health center needs

Human Service Sector Workforce Supports

- \$16.5m in loan repayment assistance for “employees who provide treatment, support, or services to clients or their families” employed by agencies funded by EOHHS, the Executive Office of Elder Affairs, the Department of Housing and Community Development, and/or the

Department of Early Education and Care. A board will be created to recommend requirements for this program by April 15, 2022. Spending should be detailed in a report by June 30, 2022.

- \$13.5m for a grant program to support the retention and recruitment of human service and home health workers; grant criteria to be determined with input from stakeholders.

Nursing Facility & Workforce Improvements

- \$25m in an interest-free or forgivable loan program for facilities to develop specialized care units, offset the costs of capital improvements, and fund innovative projects such as converting sections of facilities to affordable housing, veterans housing, or assisted living facilities to meet the needs of residents.
- \$25m for nursing facility workforce retention and recruitment, prioritizing facilities in which at least 75% of residents are enrolled in MassHealth

Workforce Investments

- Funding is largely geared towards vocational and technical skills training and apprenticeship programs for low-income folks and/or adult learners; Adult education programs, rapid reemployment contracts, supporting programs that partner industry with schools and create credentialing pathways, etc.
- \$500m for employment of individuals with Down syndrome who lost their employment due to the pandemic
- \$37.5m for the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund to prioritize grants for workers in communities disproportionately affected by the pandemic (demographic community or physical, generally speaking)
 - Some funding is prioritized for “communities disproportionately impacted by the criminal justice system with a particular focus on individuals returning to their communities from incarceration during the 2019 novel coronavirus pandemic”
 - Funding is also expected to support women whose jobs were disrupted by the pandemic and who are looking to reenter the workforce, to help with things like transportation and childcare

Food Security

- Grants will be available for food banks and other food distributors to address capital needs such as IT to develop online markets and delivery systems; adapting facilities to safety guidelines; expanding storage and preparation areas; and purchasing or leasing “point-of-sale devices to provide to retailers at no cost to provide curbside pickup and curbside payment service, including payment using Electronic Benefits Transfer cards”; and storage equipment for adapting to supply chain disruptions.
- Westborough Food Pantry and Sudbury Community Food Pantry receive \$25k each (in Sudbury, for “food security infrastructure” specifically). OpenTable, Inc, Hudson Community Pantry, and Stow Food Pantry are to receive \$100k (seems to be shared amongst them)
- Greater Boston Food Bank receives \$17m for “regional food security network infrastructure investments”, and Project Bread to receive \$1.92m for SNAP enrollment.
- \$2.7m for establishing a MA community college campus hunger network pilot program

Local & Regional COVID-19 Response & Recovery

- \$200k is set aside for the feasibility and preliminary design study of a bicycle/pedestrian trail between Needham and Newton
- Funding is set aside for Wellesley for electric vehicle purchases and charging, as well as renovating the gazebo in town and for the preparation of a “master safe routes to school plan”
- \$20k to Franklin to “support access to public transportation”
- \$150k to Natick for a study on “improving the integration and accessibility of human services in the town” as well as funding for remote meeting capabilities and tech upgrades
- \$100k to Hopkinton to diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives across town services, as well as \$30k for costs related to becoming an age- and dementia- friendly community
- \$350k to Medway for construction of water treatment plant
- \$350k to Holliston for water/sewer improvements
- \$500k to Ashland for the Riverwalk Trail Enhancement Project
- \$250k for design of the Chris Walsh Memorial Aqueduct Trail, which is partly in south Framingham

MassHealth Redetermination & Vaccine Public Awareness

- \$5m is provided to Health Care for All for MassHealth redetermination and vaccine outreach, education, and access in communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19

Health & Human Service Earmarks

- \$5m for a health equity institute established by a “state primary care association qualified under section 330A(f)(1) of the Public Health Service Act, 42 U.S.C. section 254c(f)”
- \$10m for expanding facilities and increasing inpatient psychiatric beds in children’s hospitals
- \$100k for an agency in Hudson to provide bedding and furniture to Afghan refugees
- \$5m for the Disabled Persons Protection Commission to review existing services and develop and implement an “interconnected network that will provide a continuum of care for these individuals”

Public Health Earmarks

- \$200k for a Medical Onsite Academy to address behavioral health needs of medical workers, resulting from increased stressors due to the pandemic
- \$150k for the design and installation of a generator for the Wellesley Health Department
- \$100k for the Commission to Reduce Racial Inequities in Maternal Health to be used for operational, staffing, and administrative costs

Mental Health Earmarks

- \$150k for Community Impact of Milford for maintaining a regional substance use program (outreach, intervention, recovery, outpatient)
- \$1m for “a public academic health sciences center or an academic medical center to develop or contract for asynchronous technological solutions to provide behavioral and mental health screenings and services for unmet populations” such as screening for PTSD in medical personnel related to the pandemic

- \$30k to Hopkinton for programs related to police officer mental health, wellness, and suicide prevention

Local Housing Earmarks

- \$500k to Wellesley Housing Authority for electrical upgrades, other maintenance
- \$50k for Wellesley Housing Authority for replacing stairs at the facility located at 50 Waldo court
- \$1.25m to “state-aided public housing in the town of Needham” for capital improvements
- \$75k to Sudbury Housing Trust for mortgage subsidies
- \$130k to Franklin to develop affordable and accessible senior housing*
- \$150k to Franklin for “the production of affordable, rental supportive senior housing”*
 - *These are listed as separate items
- \$100k to Natick Housing Authority for upgrades at facilities (kitchens, generators, accessibility)

Education Earmarks

- \$250k “for the construction of a health clinic at the Framingham public schools welcome center”
- \$150k to Natick public schools for after-school tutoring and mental health services