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MASSACHUSETTS STATE BUDGET PROCESS AND TIMELINE

Below is the general timeline for the basic state budget process in Massachusetts for use in planning your fiscal year budget campaign. Remember that this timeline is approximate; the process can finish quickly or it can be quite protracted. Also keep in mind that Massachusetts' fiscal year runs from July 1 through June 30, so fiscal year 2020 will begin on July 1, 2019 and end June 30, 2020.

For additional information, please refer to the following websites:

Executive Office for Administration and Finance – Budget Process

<https://www.mass.gov/operating-budget>

Massachusetts Legislature – Current and Prior Budgets

<https://malegislature.gov/Budget>

Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center – Budget Resources

<http://massbudget.org/budget.php>

Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center – Budget Browser

<http://massbudget.org/browser/index.php>

September through December

- All state agencies and executive offices prepare their respective budget plans and submit them to the Governor's Executive Office for Administration and Finance for review. The executive branch usually holds public budget hearings in relation to these plans.
- ABE advocates should strive to make their budget requests known to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education before the request to the Governor is finalized.

January

- The Governor is required by law to submit his or her budget proposal to the House of Representatives by the 4th Wednesday in January or, if he or she has just been elected, within five weeks of that day.
- The Governor's budget proposal is commonly referred to as "House 1" in the first year of a legislative session or as "House 2" in the second year of the session.
- The Governor's budget is non-binding and gives the legislature and the public an indication of the Governor's spending priorities. The House and Senate are not obligated to adopt the Governor's budget figures or priorities when they begin preparing their own budgets in the spring.
- At this stage of the budget process, it is essential for ABE advocates to:
 - communicate their budget request to their local Representatives;
 - ask those Representatives to make ABE a budget priority, and;
 - urge those Representatives to include ABE in any "wish list" they share with members of the House Ways and Means Committee and with members of House leadership.Reaching out to Representatives in this manner ensures that they know that ABE is a priority for their constituencies and that ABE is at the forefront during the budget debates. If we are successful in getting the requested budget figure included in the initial House budget, it eliminates the need to push for an amendment later, which can be a difficult step.

February and March

- Legislatively, the budget process begins in the House of Representatives, with that chamber releasing and then approving its version of the budget first, followed by the Senate. That said, the Senate can, and sometimes does, work on its version of the budget at the same time that the House is crafting its version. Neither the House nor the Senate is bound by any appropriations recommended in the Governor's proposal.
- Members of the House of Representatives communicate their priorities to members of the House Ways and Means Committee as part of the draft budget preparation.
- The House Ways and Means Committee also conducts public hearings on the budget throughout the state. ABE advocates should be sure to attend these hearings and to testify about the importance of ABE to their communities and to the state as a whole.

April

- House Ways and Means presents its budget to the full House where it is debated, amended, and passed.
- The Senate begins its budget process. Senators communicate their priorities to members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee and to the Senate leadership. The Senate is not bound by any prior appropriations figures, including those in the Governor's budget proposal or in the House's version of the budget.

- Just as with the House, it is important for ABE advocates to communicate the preferred ABE budget request to their Senators.

May

- The Senate Ways and Means Committee presents its budget to the full Senate where it is debated, amended, and passed.

June

- If the House and Senate versions of the budget are not identical, they must compromise to pass one budget for the state.
- The Conference Committee, comprised of 3 members of the House and 3 members of the Senate, is formed to negotiate the differences between the two budgets. This part of the process can be very difficult and time consuming. Because the Conference Committee would be inundated with requests from constituents, these negotiations are usually very private and the members of the Committee are not usually accessible.
- Since it is more difficult for constituents to have influence during Conference Committee negotiations, it is extremely important that ABE advocates communicate with their Representatives and Senators throughout the budget process. They should not hear from you only in a crisis or when you want something.
- A Conference Committee reconciles the differences between the two competing versions of the budget and one single budget is then presented to both the House and the Senate for a vote. The House and Senate can only vote for or against the budget in its entirety. No further amendments are allowed.
- The House and Senate pass a budget and send it to the Governor for signature.
- The Governor has 10 days to review the budget. He has the option of signing it into law, vetoing it, or, after 10 additional days, allowing it to become law automatically without his signature. The Governor also has line item veto authority and can veto entire line items, reduce the amount in a line item, and/or strike budget language. The Governor cannot add additional money to a line item.
- The full legislature (House and Senate together) need a 2/3rds vote to override any of the Governor's vetoes.

July

- The new fiscal year begins on July 1st. If a full budget for the fiscal year has not been passed by the legislature and approved by the Governor by this date, the two branches typically agree on a temporary measure to allow state government to continue to operate.