



An Act Modernizing School Construction

Sponsored by Sen. Crighton, Rep. Cahill, and Rep. Capano

Fact Sheet

Students across Massachusetts, no matter which school they attend, deserve to learn in high-quality school buildings in safe and healthy environments. The state's school construction formula, adopted in 2004, is outdated and creates barriers to getting sufficient funding for projects, particularly for low-income communities. The need across the state has far outpaced the availability of funding. State financial support has not kept up with the cost of school construction, and the financial burden of maintaining or building new school buildings has significantly increased for all communities across the state, especially in school districts that serve a disproportionate share of low-income students.

An Act Modernizing School Construction would:

Double the revenue dedicated to school construction projects.

- ❑ The need for major renovations and new construction has far outpaced the state funding needed to help finance these projects.
- ❑ The Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) has a dedicated revenue stream of one penny of the sales tax. This legislation would increase this revenue stream to two pennies of the sales tax.

Remove the arbitrary cap of 80% reimbursement for MSBA-approved school construction projects.

- ❑ This 80% cap has an overwhelmingly disproportionate impact on low-income school districts. Had this cap not existed, based the MSBA's formula to determine the reimbursement rate, these districts could have received an additional \$44 million between 2016 and 2020 to support school construction.

Reform the school construction formula using an equity lens to ensure low-income students have equitable access to high-quality school buildings.

- ❑ Our current formula considers the proportion of low-income students served, but it is designed with a limit such that all districts serving 33% or greater low-income students as compared to the state average receive the same amount of reimbursement points in this component of the formula.
- ❑ This bill would remove this limit, thereby helping ensure school districts serving a greater proportion of low-income students receive an appropriate increase in the amount of state funding for capital projects.

Modernize reimbursement rates for all school construction projects to reflect modern-day construction costs.

- ❑ This legislation would also require the MSBA to regularly revise its standards for reimbursement, which are currently outdated because construction costs have rapidly increased since the MSBA's inception. The increase in costs has far outpaced the increase in MSBA reimbursement rates. Moving forward, this bill would require proactive, regular updates to reflect modern-day costs.

Promote racially diverse schools through additional reimbursement points for schools that are part of intentional school integration plans.

- ❑ Public schools are the bedrock of our democracy, open to all regardless of race or socioeconomic status. The state had historically provided additional reimbursement to projects clearly related to efforts to integrate schools, and this legislation would reinstate this policy.