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REP. KATE HOGAN'S SENIOR NEWS



Massachusetts Annual Budget Prioritizes Seniors

Just like a household's budget, the Commonwealth's annual budget reflects its spending priorities (after fixed or mandated expenses are accounted for). The FY21 budget that was passed last month prioritizes seniors in several ways. Following are highlights from the joint House and Senate version of the bill:

The FY21 budget recognizes that COVID-19 has been particularly hard on our elder population. It includes a significant additional investment of **\$58 million beyond the FY20 budget** on programs for aging adults, and adopts several important policies that will benefit older adults.

My colleagues and I have made a commitment over time to building a continuum of care so that older adults who choose to remain in the community, rather than live in a nursing home, will be able to do so. We voted to support this approach by making a **new investment of \$17 million for rate adjustments for home care services**. Additionally, we establish a commission to develop a **licensure process for home care agencies**, a move that will pave the way for ensuring quality home care. Also, there is now a requirement in the home care line item that a range of home care providers receive training to **ensure sensitivity to the LGBTQ community**.

The pandemic has heightened our awareness of the supports that aging adults need in order to live successfully in the community. With that in mind, the budget increases the appropriations for **geriatric mental health services, elder protective services, and supportive senior housing**.

The House Elder Affairs committee has heard testimony indicating that there seems to be transmission of the virus from individuals leaving hospitals when their care is concluded and returning to nursing homes. Therefore, we included a requirement that DPH issue a report on **preventing the transmission of COVID-19** from hospitals to nursing homes, in order to prevent future outbreaks.

This has been a difficult time for many of us, and my colleagues in the legislature and I have kept the welfare of our seniors on our minds as we listened to testimony, filed amendments, and considered the budget. If there's one silver lining coming out of the pandemic, it's that we have become more aware of human suffering and how to respond, while moving toward a public health care system that works for all.

Contact Rep. Hogan: If you need assistance or would like to contact me, please call me at (617) 722-2199 or email me at Kate.Hogan@mahouse.gov.

May the New Year be happy and healthy for all!

Kate Hogan, State Representative

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