

# Understanding the State Budget and Its Effect on Communities of Color:

## *The Importance of Civic Participation in the Budget Process*



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## **Executive Summary**

Historically there has been a lack of information about budget allocations and priorities disseminated to communities of color in the state of Massachusetts. Though Blacks and Latinos represent 5.3% and 6.7% in Massachusetts, respectively, they comprise a large population of Massachusetts residents potentially adversely affected by proposed budget cuts because of their reliance on community services, public schools, public housing, and public health services. Governor Mitt Romney's House 1 budget was released on January 26, 2005, and this document set the tone for the state's priorities in spending. While funding was reduced for preventive health care programs, educational services, and transitional public housing services, the public safety budget remained one of the highest funded areas, especially in the amount provided to correctional facilities.

If these communities are consistently provided with information about the budget process and how spending is affecting the services and programs of importance to them, it is our hope that we can engage these communities in greater civic participation to advocate for themselves, their interest, and their communities. To begin this process, we researched four areas: education, housing, healthcare, and criminal justice. We report on some aspects within each area that illustrate how communities of color are affected by the budget process. The expectation is that the dissemination of this information to communities that are most affected by budget cuts will foster greater civic participation. Without this knowledge, communities of color cannot effectively advocate to their representatives for the issues and concerns that are important to them.

### *Health Care*

Racial disparities are evident in access and treatment of health care in the state of Massachusetts. Although 10.1% of blacks and 22.9% of Latinos are uninsured throughout the state, the funding is being cut for many prevention programs that disproportionately affect these communities. Programs for breast cancer and prostate cancer screenings are being cut, although it is shown that black women and black men have higher mortality rates, respectively, than their white counterparts. Blacks and Latinos account for 51% of the Massachusetts population living with HIV/AIDS, yet due to a decrease in caseloads, the Governor's House 1 budget proposes a decrease in spending for HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment.

### *Education*

The Supreme Court ruling in February 2005 on the case *Hancock v. Commissioner of Education* addressed the state's fiscal responsibility in providing adequate

education to public school students. The ruling concluded that Massachusetts is currently adequately contributing to local public schools and is not mandated to allocate any additional money to balance the disparities found in public education systems throughout the state. As a result, Governor Romney's budget recommended funding early education programs were funded at an amount that did not keep pace with inflation.

### *Public Housing*

Funding within the Department of Housing and Community Development is slated for a 7.7% decrease from the FY05 spending, a \$6.4 million difference. With more strict eligibility requirements to qualify for public assisted housing and less funding for transitional housing services, many blacks and Latinos are finding it more difficult to find housing in Massachusetts, especially in the greater Boston area. Additional budget cuts for Emergency Transitional Assistance in the amount of \$10 million have exacerbated the difficulty communities of color face in housing while relying on other welfare benefits.

### *Criminal Justice*

The Department of Public Safety is slated for the fifth largest allotment in the House 1 budget. The majority of funding is toward the Department of Corrections for operations and to provide services to the prison population, though education programs to prisoners have drastically been reduced over the years. Blacks and Latinos are disproportionately represented in the prison population as a whole and make up 80% of those convicted under mandatory sentencing laws. Those with a criminal record or history of interactions with the police may find it especially difficult to qualify for public housing, education loans, or find a job due to the background check system known as CORI. Funded through the Criminal History Systems Board, CORI has been criticized for providing inaccurate information and information that is easily misinterpreted, thus unfairly affected anyone who has a record in the CORI system.

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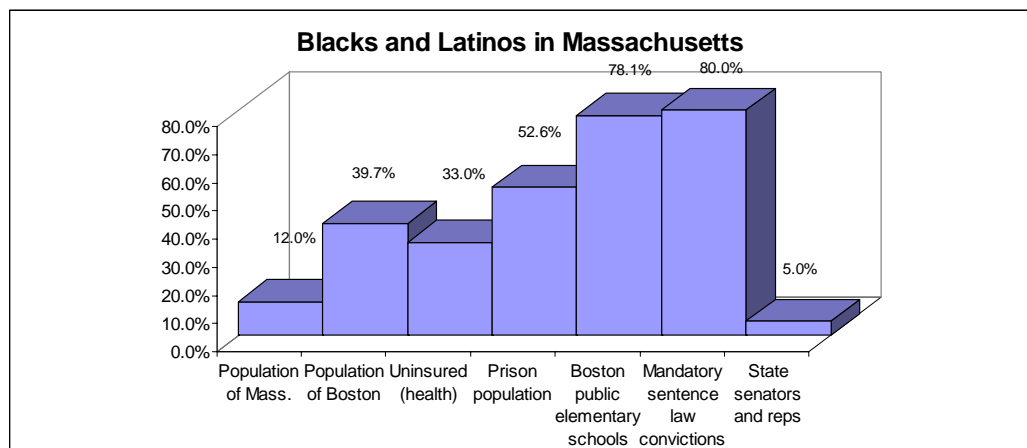
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## *Background and Methodology*

The Union of Minority Neighborhoods (UMN) was created in 2002 to address the disenfranchisement of low-income communities of color in Massachusetts. Their mission is to ensure that skilled, committed, grassroots leaders of color effectively organize on issues of concern in their communities, region, and nation. They do this through skills training and leadership classes to develop leaders from within minority communities as well as by providing technical assistance to community groups and participating in coalition building with other grassroots organizations. Currently, UMN is sponsoring Black Advocacy Day, a lobby day for minorities at the statehouse. The second annual Black Advocacy Day will be held on May 3, 2005. Because they are a nonprofit with limited resources, and a staff of just two, they requested our help with research and data synthesis that would help them make this day an even bigger success.

The general problem laid out by the Union of Minority Neighborhoods, and corroborated by many of our key informants, is that communities of color and low-income communities in Massachusetts are in general not empowered to advocate on their own behalf at the state policy level. Some basic demographic information (see figure 1) illustrates this problem. Blacks and Latinos together account for 12% of the population of Massachusetts and 39.7% of the population of Boston. However, these two groups together make up a third of the state's uninsured, over half of its prison population, more than three-quarters of the students in Boston public schools, and a full 80% of those convicted under mandatory sentencing laws. However, blacks and Latinos are only 5% of state senators and representatives.

**Figure 1**



In addition, while 6.8% of white families in Massachusetts fall below the poverty line, 20.2% of African Americans and 28.7% of Latinos fall below the poverty level. Blacks and Latino families are also more likely to pay greater than 50% of their gross income to rent. Meanwhile, 86% of whites graduate from high school while 76% of blacks and 55% of Latinos in the state achieve this milestone.

The results of a recent study by the Harvard University Civil Rights project may not seem surprising in light of these statistics; their survey shows that about half of blacks and Latinos in the Boston area feel they are discriminated against, treated with less respect, or given worse service at establishments than their white counterparts (The Civil Rights Project, Harvard University). The Union of Minority Neighborhoods is concerned not only about the lack of representation in official elected positions, but also that the voices of the average black or Latino in Massachusetts is not being heard by anyone at the statehouse, particularly when it comes to the laws and budget issues that may adversely affect these communities.

There are many organizations monitoring statehouse activities and advocating on behalf of these communities, but there is a pronounced information gap: nobody has developed an efficient way to alert minority communities of statehouse activities affecting them. The Union of Minority Neighborhoods has asked us to help fill that gap, at least temporarily, by compiling up to date information about some key issues (especially in the areas of education, housing, healthcare, and criminal justice), formatting it in a clear and concise way in a two-page fact sheet, and distributing it to affected communities. This fact sheet will be then be used to generate awareness of issues and excitement about Black Advocacy Day. Some of our research may also be used as a more detailed analysis of certain issues to be presented to attendees of the event. The ultimate goal of Black Advocacy Day, and the culmination of our work, is to help minority communities better understand citizen lobbying and to become more involved with statehouse activities.

To begin our work, UMN put us in touch with some initial key contacts at organizing and advocacy groups who are involved with monitoring statehouse activities or advocating at the state level in some way. Specifically, we met with representatives from Health Care for All, the Massachusetts chapter of the National Social Workers Association, the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center, one current and one former state representative, and one aide to a state representative. Through meetings with these key informants, we had a chance to ask questions about issues that are of current importance and how minority communities may be affected. We then supplemented this with research into written policy statements, budget analyses, and other relevant material.

Because the state budget is currently being negotiated for the coming fiscal year and most organizations efforts are focused on and organized around this, our work has been directly affected. The primary focus of non-profits and organizations whose constituency includes communities of color, is the budget appropriation. This decided our increased attention toward the budgetary process, though not to the complete exclusion of other legislative issues. We focused in particular on the governor's budget, or House 1. This is due in large part to the association of the release date of the House 1 and our project timeline and because the first Governor's budget sets the tone for the budgetary debate and later versions of the budget. The House Ways and Means budget came out as we were completing our project and is currently being analyzed by groups throughout the state.

As mentioned above, UMN requested that we focus our effort on education, housing, healthcare, and criminal justice. These areas are especially relevant to

communities of color in Massachusetts, the few demographic statistics in figure 1 above demonstrate. Each area is extensive, and a comprehensive analysis of each was beyond our scope of research. Instead, keeping in mind the goal of encouraging participation in the budget process, we attempted to determine which issues within each category pointed to racial disparities or contained issues that provided a clear entry point for engagement. Recognizing the difficulty involved in a complete proliferation of relevant information to minority communities will not be solved over the course of the semester, this report documents our findings and provides recommendations for future efforts to fill this “information flow gap.”

## *Budget Process in Massachusetts*

Governor Mitt Romney released his FY 2006 budget on January 26, 2005, beginning another season of budget negotiations in Massachusetts. To understand where and how minority communities are affected by the budget, some background on the process itself is useful.

The budget process in Massachusetts begins with the Governor presenting his or her version of how the Commonwealth's money should be allocated to the House of Representatives. This budget, referred to as the House 1, sets the tone for how and where money should be spent during the upcoming fiscal year. Recommendations in House 1 are for the fiscal year beginning in July; for example, the most recent House 1 budget recommendations are for the 2006 fiscal year beginning July 1, 2005 and ending June 30, 2006. House 1 FY 2006 proposes spending inside of \$23.2 billion, a 2.4% increase from the FY 2005 budget of \$22.67 billion.

The budget is then transferred to the House Ways and Means Committee. During this time, public hearings are held allowing lobbyists and citizens to contact their representatives to advocate for their interests and priorities. It is important to note that the Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee meets more with fellow members of the Committee as opposed to individual advocacy groups to prioritize line items and issues reflected in the budget (Tom Birmingham, 2005). Therefore it is imperative that citizens contact their representatives and encourage them to advocate internally for their causes. Representatives take this time to amend the House 1 budget and then vote for its approval. Massachusetts requires 81 out of 160 House of Representatives members to legitimate the House budget bill. When this occurs, the bill becomes the House Ways and Means Budget and is turned over to the Senate.

The Senate Ways and Means Committee receives the House budget for review and state Senators begin to make their recommendations and amendments to the document. After a vote of approval by at least 21 out of the 40 Senators, the budget becomes the Senate budget bill. At this point, the budget goes into conference committee made up of members of both chambers. The task of this committee is to reconcile the House and Senate versions of the budget. Once the budget hits this point, the window of opportunity for citizens to talk to their representatives is closed and discussions are primarily internal.

The reconciled version still needs to be passed by the full House and full Senate. Renegotiations take place within the joint conference committee until both chambers have approved the same budget. At this point, the Senate presents the bill to the Governor, who has ten days to review the document and veto sections of which he or she does not approve. If the Governor chooses to veto any sections, a two-thirds majority vote is required in both the House and the Senate to override the veto. Once the Governor, Senate, and House have all approved the same document, budget is produced, also known as the General Appropriations Act is final. The final budget is traditionally submitted by June 30<sup>th</sup>, but if there are a number of items being disputed, they can be continuously renegotiated and the



final budget will be submitted at a later date. Figure 2 recaps this budget process and includes actual date of delivery of documents to date of this report.

As will be explored further in later sections, communities of color have been adversely affected by budget trends from year to year. Low-income and immigrant communities feel the brunt of these budget cuts when social services are cut from their communities or when welfare spending and job training opportunities decrease. By understanding the budget process and engaging in civic participation, these communities can lobby for change and increased funding for programs that enrich their communities and lives.

It is also worth acknowledging that although the budget process enjoys almost exclusive attention at this time of the year, there are other legislative activities affecting communities of color. Massachusetts has a two-year legislative session and a number of bills of interest to communities of color will come up for discussion during the 2005-06 session. Some legislation has budget implications as well. Several current legislative initiatives with the potential to affect communities of color will be mentioned in the discussions below of issues relative to education, housing, healthcare, and criminal justice.

**Figure 2 Overview of the budget process**

Source: [www.mass.gov](http://www.mass.gov)

**Fiscal year 2006  
budget documents**

[Governor's Budget](#)

January 26, 2005

[House One Budget  
Revisions](#)

March 25, 2005

[House One Budget  
Revisions](#)

April 2, 2005



[House Ways & Means  
Budget](#)

April 13, 2005



[House Budget](#)

April 15, 2005





## *Healthcare*

Health related racial disparities are well documented. As an indicator of differences in access to basic care, blacks and Hispanics tend to be uninsured at rates higher than their white counterparts. This is true in Massachusetts, where the estimated half million uninsured residents are disproportionately non-white; 13.7% of blacks and 21.8% of Hispanics have no health insurance compared with 8.2% of the general population. The uninsured are typically working adults who are self-employed or work for a small business where health insurance is not offered or is cost-prohibitive due to relatively high employee contributions required. Alternatively some residents may be available for safety-net programs through MassHealth, the state's Medicaid program, but not know how to take advantage of these services.

Beyond health insurance, there are many layers of racial disparities in healthcare. Lower rates of health insurance may play a role, but the reasons for these disparities are generally thought to be more complicated than that and may include racial discrimination in the health care system, environmental racism, among other factors. The facts below illustrate just a few of the disparities.

- African Americans represent 5% of the population of Massachusetts but in the first three years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century represented 33% of new HIV diagnoses. (AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts, 2005)
  - Nationwide, HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of death for African Americans in the age range of 25-34 (AIDS Action Committee, 2005)
  - According to the Center for Disease Control, the death rate for black men with prostate cancer is higher than for any other racial or ethnic group. (CDC, 2005) In Boston, the death rate for black men diagnosed with prostate cancer is 2.5 times as high as the death rate for white men diagnosed with the same disease. (Health Care for All, 2005)
  - White women are more likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer, but black women are more likely to die of the disease.
  - Nationwide, African Americans are twice as likely as whites to be diagnosed with diabetes. (Health Care for All, 2005)
  - In Boston, African American children are hospitalized for asthma at a rate almost four times as high as white children. (Health Care for All, 2005)
- Funding to ensure healthcare access through insurance safety-net programs for lower income residents, programs to help employed adults receive insurance, outreach programs to educate residents about existing programs for which they are already eligible, and accessible public health programs are all vital. They are even more important for minority communities who are disproportionately uninsured. Several legislative and budget initiatives under consideration with these goals in mind are discussed below.

## Pending Legislation

There are several pieces of pending legislation that address the concerns outlined above. Among them are the Massachusetts Health Care Trust Fund bill and the Health Care Affordability Act, both of which are attempts to provide greater access to health care and insurance coverage for residents of Massachusetts. These are generally considered competing bills that cannot be simultaneously implemented. Each bill has its own constituency of supporters, although some groups would support either bill. The National Association of Social Workers (Massachusetts chapter), for example, lists both bills as part of their 2005 legislative agenda.

The Health Care Affordability Act, sponsored by Senator Richard Moore and Representative Deborah Blumer, and supported by Health Care for All, would expand MassHealth programs in order to reach more people. Specifically, adults with household incomes under 200% of the federal poverty level and all children in families with household incomes under 300% of the federal poverty level would be guaranteed insurance. Additional low-income residents would be assisted with health insurance costs through subsidies. Employers would be held accountable by being required to contribute to a state insurance fund if they did not offer insurance to their employees. The program would further be funded by an increased tobacco tax as well as state and federal funding.

The Massachusetts Health Care Trust Fund bill is sponsored by the coalition Mass Care and was introduced by Senator Steve Tolman and Representative Frank Hynes. It would provide single-payer health coverage in the state. Anyone resident would be able to buy into this plan regardless of employment status. Expenses such as co-payments and deductibles are eliminated. This plan would be paid for through income tax premiums as well as state and federal money. Because many administrative costs would be eliminated, single payer health care should cost less than other options to implement.

The governor unveiled his plan to improve health insurance in April 2005, just a few months after the release of his FY 2006 House Budget 1. His proposal is called an Act to Expand the Availability of Health Insurance. Governor Romney says that no additional money will be needed for his plan; instead, money currently spent on health care will be spent more efficiently. Private insurance companies play a big role in his plan, offering more affordable insurance plans to entrepreneurs and other uninsured residents with the help of state intervention. Residents would also be able to use pretax dollars to pay premiums, further reducing their own contribution to the insurance plan.

An additional piece of legislation concerns providing insurance coverage for low-income people with HIV/AIDS. The MassHealth HIV program is designed to provide health coverage to low-income people with HIV/AIDS. Previously for the otherwise ineligible to qualify for MassHealth, they needed to be diagnosed with AIDS. The change to include HIV was made to recognize the need for early treatment. However, now the issue has become income eligibility. Originally the program existed for people with incomes as high as 200% of the federal poverty level. This was reduced to 133% of the federal poverty level in the FY 2004

budget. In 2005, interest groups lobbied to restore eligibility to 200%. Senator Mark Montigny has introduced legislation this session to make a permanent provision to authorize MassHealth HIV program to cover eligible people up to 200% of the federal poverty level. (Governor Romney has proposed 6.9 million for funding of this program—line item 4000-1400. This is a slight decrease in funding from last year, due to a projected drop in caseload, but significantly designates the 200% eligibility criteria for the coming year.)

## **Budget Issues**

Healthcare funding in Massachusetts is complicated by the multiple programs that fall under this general category and by the fact that some programs are funded “off-budget” (for example the Uncompensated Care Pool or “Free Care”) or are in transition from off to on budget (the Mass Health Essential Program). Off-budget refers to programs that do not have an actual line-item, but receive provisions for funding through language in the budget; this is a more complicated funding mechanism. In addition, the Governor’s Budget includes using a funding carry-over of some 2005 Medicaid money into 2006; no such carry-over from 2006 into 2007 is proposed however. This further complicates understanding true 2006 numbers and some analysts believe it likely means an under-funding of Medicaid programs in 2006 that will need to be corrected in 2007 (MBPC, 2005). In addition, health care costs often rise at a rate higher than inflation. This makes comparisons in funding from year-to-year especially difficult to follow.

Oral health/dental care is an important health issue that will not be covered in this report. Pharmacy programs to help elders and those with disabilities buy needed prescription drugs are equally notable, though not covered in depth by this report. Budget appropriations to the Department of Mental Health similarly will not be addressed. Instead, this report will focus on the MassHealth, the Massachusetts Medicaid program, and Public Health sections of the budget. MassHealth is biggest healthcare funding category in the budget, accounting for approximately \$7 billion dollars of proposed funding in the House 1 budget for its various programs. Public health programs, account for over \$400,000 in proposed spending in the Governor’s budget.

As mentioned above, the death rate from prostate cancer is over twice as high for black men than white men among those diagnosed with the disease. The line item 4513-1112 under public health is designated for prostate cancer screening. This is a program that historically acknowledges the diseases disproportionate affect on black men and aims at correcting this through screening, prevention, and education initiatives. This year the Governor has proposed funding the program at \$250,000. This is a 75% decrease from FY2005 when the program was funded at one million dollars, and a 93% decrease from five years ago (FY 2001) when \$3.2 million was designated for this program.

This decrease is especially alarming because there is no evidence that the incidence of prostate cancer is decreasing. In fact, according to the latest report of the Massachusetts Cancer Registry (MRC), in the period from 1997-2001, prostate cancer was the most common newly diagnosed cancer among men in

Massachusetts, and the incident rate rose 1.1% over the period (DPH, 2004). Though this increase was not viewed as statistically significant by the MRC, it certainly does not indicate a decrease in the problem. Further, the same report noted that, “for all types of cancer combined for 1997-2001, black, non-Hispanics had the highest age-adjusted mortality rate among males, with 357.1 deaths per 100,000 males.” Over the five year period covered in this report, there were 24,986 new cases of prostate cancer reported in the state, or close to 5,000 each year. At this rate \$50 is allocated for each new incident of prostate cancer.

The House Ways and Means budget recommends restoring this funding for prostate cancer screening that the governor proposed cutting. Their budget allocates \$1.1 million to this line item, restoring last year’s level with some additional money that will cover inflation costs, though not allow much room for expansion. The Mass Budget and Policy Center notes that as this funding was restored, there was an equivalent amount cut from the family health services line item. (MBPC(a), 2005)

There are an estimated 22,000-24,000 people currently living with HIV/AIDS in Massachusetts (including undiagnosed cases). (DPH(a), 2005) As with prostate cancer, people of color are disproportionately affected. Though blacks and Hispanics together make up approximately 12% of the population of Massachusetts, they account for 51% of people living with HIV/AIDS in the state according to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Among women, there are more African Americans than whites living with HIV/AIDS. The department reports an increase in reported HIV/AIDS cases in the state over all (DPH(a), 2004).

Two line items are especially relevant to HIV/AIDS. Under Public Health expenditures, there is a line item for HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment (line item 4512-0103) for “prevention, treatment, and housing subsidies” for persons with HIV/AIDS. The governor has proposed a 1.9% increase in real terms for this line item. MBPC notes, “When adjusted for inflation, funding for these prevention, education, outreach and screening services has been cut by 39 percent since FY 2001” (MBPC, 2005). For the MassHealth HIV Plan line item (4000-1400), in contrast, the Governor has proposed a decrease in real terms due to a perceived drop in caseload demand.

According to the American Cancer Society, an estimated 5,170 women were diagnosed with breast cancer in Massachusetts last year (ACC, 2004). Black women have lower rates of breast cancer than white women, but among women diagnosed with breast cancer, black women have a higher mortality rate (ACC(a) 9, 2005). The governor has proposed funding breast cancer screening for uninsured women (line item 4570-1500) at 3,034,833. As noted by the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center (p19), this is an amount several thousand dollars higher than current year projected funding, but the increase does not even account for inflation. In addition, there are over a half million uninsured residents in Massachusetts. If we assume that three-quarters of them are adults and half of those adults are women, we can estimate approximately 187,500 uninsured women in Massachusetts, a disproportionate number of them African American. Funding

this program at this level means \$16.19 is allotted for each uninsured adult women in the state for breast cancer screening and education each year.

In addition to breast cancer, prostate cancer, and HIV/AIDS, public health section line items cover a number of other vital programs for healthy communities such as gambling addiction services, suicide prevention programs, Hepatitis C screening and treatment, hearing screening for infants, among others. Not all the news is bad. Family health programs for low-income women and children, including money to fund services for non-English speaking victims of domestic violence, may see a significant funding increase, for example.

Overall public health expenditures have seen a significant decrease in the past five years. Adjusted for inflation, according to MBPC calculations, public health funding proposed in the House 1 budget is \$150 million, or 27%, below what it was in FY 2001.

A healthy start in life is critical to healthy outcomes later in life and protecting children is a priority to many. Several line items in the budget pertain to children's health and healthcare. Proposed funding for the Executive Office of Health and Human Services and Medical Administration is \$123.7 million. This amount covers several programs and services and there is some flexibility in funding throughout the office. However, the budget also allows for recommendations within the office, and funding any one program or service cannot exceed the recommendation by any amount. One such line item within this structure is the Children's Medical Security Plan (line item 4000-0990), a program to provide health coverage to children in Massachusetts who would otherwise have none, including children who do not qualify for MassHealth. With funding proposed at \$20.2 million. Health Care for All calls this a "good start." MBPC notes that this is a decrease over last year's proposed spending, but an increase over the projected actual spending. Both groups believes this is likely adequate funding, but due to the nature and importance of the program for vulnerable children, it is important that this line item does not get decreased in later budget negotiations, and there is some concern expressed by Health Care for All that if enrollment grows, funding will need to be increased.

There are an estimated 105,000 people in Massachusetts who are uninsured but eligible for existing programs, as many as half them children.\* The MassHealth Enrollment Outreach Grants (line item 4000-0352) is a program that provides grants to organizations to help enroll some of these uninsured people in programs for which they are eligible. This is a new line item this year with proposed funding at \$250,000. HCFA sees this as inadequate funding for outreach and recommends \$1.25 million for this purpose. MBPC notes that although there was no funding for this purpose provided last year, in previous years when outreach programs were funded, the funding amount was about one million dollars for this purpose.

The table below summarizes funding trends for several of the programs discussed above. Though only a sampling of the many programs that fall under the department of Public Health and Executive Office of Health and Human services, the discussion and table are meant to highlight programs that effect many of the

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\* 105,000 figure comes from MBPC Budget Monitor. MBPC estimate 41,000 uninsured but eligible children (Budget Monitor p. 9). HCFA estimates 54,000 eligible but uninsured children (children's advocates listserve).

more vulnerable populations in Massachusetts as well as provide an entry point in civic involvement in the budget process. There are two important points to remember when reviewing a table such as this. First, numbers are not in constant dollars; inflation is not accounted for. Expenditures that are the same for year to year lose some value due to inflation. In addition, healthcare costs have increased at rates greater than inflation in recent years. Second, this table addresses trends. In other words, funding could remain the same from year to year, or even increase, and still not be at the level it should be to be effective.

<b>*** Issue and Line Item</b>	<b>FY06 House 1</b>	<b>FY05 Projected spending</b>	<b>% change FY05 to FY06</b>	<b>FY01</b>
Prostate Cancer Screening 4513-1112	250,000**	1,000,000	-75%	3,200,000
MassHealth HIV Plan 4000-1400	6,926,068	7,323,663	-5%	10,000,000
HIV Prevention, Treatment and Services 4512-0103	34,697,303	33,844,099	+3%	51,136,334
Early Breast Cancer Detection 4570-1500	3,034,833	3,029,488	+>1%	2,600,821
Children's Medical Security Plan 4000-0990	20,207,603	16,261,992	+24%	NA
MassHealth Enrollment Outreach Grants 4000-0352	250,000	0	NA	NA

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\*\*\* Table figures from Massachusetts State Budget FY 2001. For FY 2005 and FY 2006 from projected FY 2005 spending and FY 2006 House 1 proposal.

\*\* The House Ways and Means Committee has rejected this recommendation and proposed funding of \$1.1 million dollars for this line item.



## *Education*

It is widely acknowledged that school systems are not equal; quality of education often depends on where a student attends school and what resources are available. High school drop-out rates, as one measure of the municipal educational success, show racial disparities. A study done by the Department of Education showed that Hispanics have the highest rate at 9.8%, followed by African Americans with a drop out rate of 6.7 % while the drop-out rate of white students was just 2.7% during that same year. Because much funding comes from local taxes, state education funding is needed to help eliminate funding inequalities between wealthy and poor districts. Not all communities are satisfied that the state adequately helps them and in 1999 6<sup>th</sup> grader Julie Hancock of Brockton filed suit as the lead plaintiff in a case against the Commissioner of Education charging that children residing in less affluent areas of the state were not receiving the education mandated by the Constitution.

The plaintiffs hoped to build on the 1993 success of education advocates in the Massachusetts Supreme Court case McDuffy v. Secretary of State. In that case, students throughout the state believed that their very low-income school districts were not providing them with an adequate education. The Court agreed and later that year the Massachusetts Education Reform Act (MERA '93) was passed as an attempt to minimize funding disparities through more efficient state appropriations while holding all schools accountable for student achievement standards. Local aid funding did increase by as much as 6% annually after adjustment for inflation between 1994 and 2002 as a result of MERA (MBPC, 2003) As a result, student/teacher ratios dropped from 19.2 in 1993 to 17.7 in 1999 as a state average while the average teacher's salary increased.

One controversial component of MERA is the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment Systems (MCAS). The MCAS is a state-wide assessment exam that measures student performance and achievement as well as determines students' competency in the subject areas of Mathematics, English, History, Social Sciences, Science, Technology, Arts, Foreign Language and Health based on the Seven Curriculum Frameworks. By 2003, students were required to pass the Mathematics and Language Arts portions of MCAS in order to graduate.

On February 15, 2005, three weeks after the release of the House 1 budget, the Court ruled 5-2 against Julie Hancock stating that the Governor and Legislature were indeed fulfilling their constitutional duty by providing adequate education to all public school students in the state. Julie Hancock was a junior at Brockton High by the time the decision was made. In reference to the court's decision, Mitt Romney stated in the Boston Globe that "just spending more, by sending more money to the same people to do the same things, is not going to solve our problems" (Boston.com, 2/16/05). A decision in favor of the plaintiffs in this court case might have meant major revisions for the budget. Instead, House 1 remained a reflection of recent trends.



### **Boston English High School**

The new millennium began with an economy that was weakening. After September 11 2001, the state lost \$300 million, causing cuts all across the board including education aid. In addition, MCAS remediation funding dropped from \$50 million to \$10 million, class size ratio increased once again from approximately 20 students in a classroom to over 30 in a class with one teacher.

The Governor's House 1 Fiscal Year 2006 Budget includes two main areas regarding education: Early Education and Care and K-12 Education. The total budgetary recommendation for both sections for the FY 2006 was approximately \$4.18 billion. House Ways and Means budget recently suggested a slightly larger total of \$ 4.19 billion for both sections. Each section has various components and services also included within the budget.

### **Department of Early Education and Care**

The proposed budgetary direct appropriations allotted to the department of early education and care in the House 1 budget is \$443.2 million. The largest proportion of the proposed budget allotment within this is Early Education and Care Programs, slated for \$385.1 million. This aspect of Early Education would support endeavors such as community-based programs that provide direct services to parents, child care provider training, and head start programs.

The Governor recommends expanding the Department of Early Education by joining it with programs and services offered by the Office of Child Care and Services and Department of Education. Consolidating these programs would result in an increase of \$6.5 million or 1.5%, though when accounting for inflation there is actually a real dollar decrease of \$2.9 million (DOE, 2005). Furthermore, the House 1 budget proposes to reduce the budget for Healthy Families Newborn Visiting Program, a program created to support pregnant teens, teen parents, and their children, by 50% from \$12.2 million to \$6.1 million in FY 2006.

The impact of early childhood education programs in producing healthy, productive citizens later in life should not be underestimated. The High/Scope

Perry Preschool Study was a 40-year longitudinal study that evaluated the impact of the Head Start Preschool Program on 123 low-income and minority students. At the end of the study, it was found that students who enrolled within this program had a higher rate of being successful in school based on the graduation rate of 66% for those who attended compared to only about 45% who did not. Furthermore, the experimental group earned approximately \$20,800 as opposed to \$15,300 earned by the control group (Kirp, 2004).

The fiscal year 2006 House Ways and Means Budget recommends a 3.6% increase for early education and child care for a total of \$465.8 million. This financial increase would yield an increase in subsidized child care funding from \$278.9 million in FY 2005 to \$285.7 million in FY 2006. Furthermore, the House Ways and Means Committee suggest an increase in Head Start program grants from \$6.1 to \$7.5 million, though the Governor's budget recommended level-funding for this item. Finally, House Ways and Means proposes level-funding for Healthy Families Newborn Visiting Program, which is currently \$12.1 and remains below FY 2002 allocations of \$21.2 million for this program (MBPC).

### **K-12 Education**

State support for K-12 Education is derived from two sources. Chapter 70 Aid is the main allocation to local municipalities for education. Department of Education's grants and reimbursements programs are grants awarded to specific purposes to a number of districts throughout the state. Budget cuts within the department of education would result in drastic eliminations of educational support and youth programs. For example, the class size reduction program received approximately \$18 million between fiscal years 2001 and 2003, which maintained class sizes under 20 students in general. However, in fiscal year 2004, the class reduction program was eliminated from the budget and class size ratios have increased to over than 30:1.

In his House 1 budget, the Governor has proposed to increase funding for K-12 education to \$3.7 billion, an increase of over 2% from the current fiscal year. There is also a proposal to increase funding for Chapter 70 Aid by approximately \$77 million or 2% in FY 2006. However, this amount remains below the FY 2002 level by \$254.3 million (MBPC, 2005). In addition \$4.9 billion was recommended for the Grants and Reimbursements Program in the FY 2006 budget, which is a 3.9% increase from FY 2005, though a 14% decrease from the FY 2001 level (MBPC, 2005).

The House Ways and Means budget further reduces the budgetary appropriation for this line-item for FY 2006. \$3.7 billion was recommended, which is a 2.2% increase from FY 2005 allocations for K-12 Education spending. Chapter 70 Aid received approximately \$3.3 billion, a 2.4% increase from the previous year along with a 0.3% increase of \$1.5 million for Grants and Reimbursements.

**Table of Trends in Education Funding**

<b>*Issue/Program</b>	<b>Line Item in FY 2006</b>	<b>FY 2001</b>	<b>FY 2005</b>	<b>FY 2006</b>
Early Education and Care	3000-3000	\$106,873,607	\$449,845,031	\$443,252,049
K-12 Education	7010-0005	Approximately \$3,667,312,000	\$3,646,485,481	\$3,738,845,003
Chapter 70 Aid	7061-0008	\$2,893,142,578	\$3,182,954,601	\$3,260,234,211

As previously mentioned, Massachusetts Education Reform Act established the Foundation Budget as a way to alleviate the effects of state's heavy reliance on local property tax to fund education. However, with a decrease in state funding for public education, reliance on local property tax would increase. The local property tax rate for Medford is \$13.28 per \$1,000 with a per-pupil spending of \$9,601. Wellesley, on the other hand, has a property tax rate of \$8.12 per \$1000 with a per-pupil spending of \$9,298. One may argue that Medford's property tax rate is higher than that of Wellesley though the per-pupil spending is comparable. However, it is interesting to note that the population of Wellesley is approximately 26,613 with 2,614 people per square mile whereas Medford's population is almost double that with a population of 55,765 and 6,851 people per square mile. Moreover, MCAS test scores for Medford were 239/235 out of a possible range between 268 and 280 (depending on the grade and subject) and SAT scores were 464/477 out of 800/800 compared to Wellesley MCAS and SAT scores of 256/253 and 594/596 respectively (Boston Magazine, 2004). Furthermore, in 2004-2005 the student-teacher ratio is 12.2 in Medford. Last year the drop-out rate was 3.8%, slightly higher than the state average of 3.3%. In Wellesley, the student-teacher ratio is 13.1 with a drop out rate of 0.3%, a full three percentage points below the state average.

\*Medford V. Wellesley Educational Factors

	Medford	Wellesley
Population	55,765	26,613
People per square mile	6,851	2,614
Property Tax Rate Per \$1000	\$13.28	\$8.12
Per-Pupil Spending	\$9,601	\$9,298

\* FY 2001 information was found at [http://www.mass.gov/bb/fy2001h1/budget\\_recommendations/departments/ofc.htm](http://www.mass.gov/bb/fy2001h1/budget_recommendations/departments/ofc.htm)  
 FY 2005 Chapter 70 Aid budget found at [http://finance1.doe.mass.edu/chapter70/chapter\\_05.html](http://finance1.doe.mass.edu/chapter70/chapter_05.html)  
 Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center "Budget Monitor" February 11, 2005 issue

\* Information from the Massachusetts Department of Education, 2005; <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/home.asp>

MCAS: English/Math (out of a possible range of 268 to 280 depending on the grade and subject)	239/235	256/253
SAT: Verbal/Math (out of 800/800)	464/477	594/596
Drop-out Rate (compared to state rate of 3.3 in 2003-2004)	3.8	.3
Student/teacher ratio (compared to state rate of 13.3 in 2004-2005)	12.2	13.1

It is interesting to note that the per-pupil spending in both areas was over \$9,000 and the student/teacher ratio were also relatively close to the state average though the property tax value rate for Medford was relatively higher when compared to Wellesley. This brief analysis of a number of educational factors illustrates the disparities in MCAS and SAT scores as well as the drop out rates, which may due to a difference in population density. With a higher number of students per school and per teacher, it is likely that drop out rates in higher density areas will be higher than their lower density counterparts. For the cities that are being funded at approximately the same rate, the density of the area and of the school may not be taken into consideration when funding for individual cities was calculated.. Thus, in order to decrease the disparities between these cities, higher funding should be allocated to more densely populated areas.

## *Housing*



**South Street Apartments, Public Housing in Boston**

Massachusetts has historically been a state with high housing values and low homeownership. Massachusetts ranks 41<sup>st</sup> in the nation in homeownership rate with only 65% of the householders owning their own home. Just about 8% of the housing units in the state are publicly subsidized and another 70,000 households receive some rental assistance (DHCD, HMA, 2005). Counting populations in both publicly subsidized housing as well as those receiving rental assistance, approximately 25% of the renter's in Massachusetts benefit in some way from publicly funded housing assistance (DHCD, HMA 2005). This is in no small part due to the high costs of housing in the state. The National Low Income Housing Coalition deemed Massachusetts the most expensive state in which to rent a home (NLIHC, 2004).

Massachusetts is also a state with a relatively high median household income. This high median household income, however, conceals the growing income inequity in the state. Latinos, at \$27,300, have just over half the median household income as that of white families which have a median household income of \$50,502. Black families have a median income of \$33,727, also well below that of white families. While 7% of the white residents in Massachusetts live below the poverty level, this figure is 21% of blacks and 30% of Latinos. The median gross rent for whites in Massachusetts is \$689, for blacks \$650, and for Latinos it is \$590. These are figures for the state, and are higher within the city of Boston (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). This disparity is further highlighted by the discrepancy in the populations receiving public assistance income. Included in public assistance income is any monies or funding provided for housing.

### **Public Housing**

Public housing is rental housing established for low and moderate income families, the elderly, persons with disabilities and selected veterans. It is funded by both the state and federal government and comes in various forms. Most public housing is located within apartment buildings, but there are also units located in townhouses as well as scattered-site single family homes. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), there are 1.3 million

households living in public housing units in the country. These are managed by 3,300 housing authorities. In the state of Massachusetts public housing is run by local housing authorities.

Both HUD and the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development fund the 253 local housing authorities in Massachusetts. There are about 90,000 state and federally funded public housing units in Massachusetts. About 50,000 of those 90,000 units are solely state funded. The Boston Housing Authority is responsible for 30% of the state's public housing as 15,000 units are located within Boston proper. Most public housing developments are apartments that have been built and subsidized by the government (both state and federal), and are intended to provide safe and affordable living to those who need it. Housing Authorities have different types of public housing available to families, to the disabled and to the elderly. Supportive housing is provided to those who require assisted living and congregate housing is also available in certain cities or towns. In some cases there are mixed housing developments that have units for different types of households.

Housing Authorities are responsible for determining eligibility as well as management and operation of the public housing developments. Specifically, housing authorities make sure that households maintain compliance with the lease, perform reexaminations of the household income at least once every twelve months and transfer families from one unit to another if needed to prevent over and under crowding. They also terminate leases when necessary and are responsible for ensuring safe and sanitary living conditions.



**South Street Apartments, Public Housing in Boston**

Eligibility is determined through various guidelines that differ from year to year and region to region. Typically, the household can earn no more than 80% of the area median income for low income and 50% for very low income households. In the city of Boston, 80% of the area median income is \$39,629 and 50% of the area median income is \$19,815. These are estimates based on U.S. Census data from the year 1999, and are likely to be higher for 2005 and 2006. Approximately 34% of the black population in Boston, and 40% of the Latino population, have a

median income under 50% of the area median income. The population of African Americans that make 80% or below of the area median income in Boston is about 56%, in the Latino population 60% make under 80% of the area median income (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.)

Public housing is limited to low-income households, and is determined by the local housing authority based on annual income, age (over sixty for elderly housing), disability, and U.S. citizenship/eligible immigration status. The rent of the public housing unit that a household is responsible for is based on income and cost of utilities. For those who are to reside in publicly funded elderly housing or housing for persons with disabilities, tenants will pay 30% of net income when the tenant is not responsible for utilities and 25% where the tenant is responsible for all or some of the apartment's utilities. For those residing in family public housing, the tenants are responsible to pay 32% of net income where the tenant is not responsible for utilities, 30% of net income where the tenant pays some of the utilities, and 27% of net income where the tenant pays all of the utilities.

The House 1 Budget designed by Governor Mitt Romney proposes a total of \$77.1 million state funds for the Department of Housing and Community Development FY 2006. This is \$6.4 million less, or about 8% less than that which was allotted in 2005. FY 2005 the Housing and Community Development budget was \$83.5 million which means there is a -7.7% change in the budget.

The House 1 budget proposes \$31.3 million for FY 2006 for Subsidies to the Public Housing Authorities (line item 7004-9005) in Massachusetts. The allotment is used for the maintenance and operations of the project and its developments and rentals. Also, it provides the funding needed for tenant selection, determination of eligibility for continued occupancy and other issues such as hearings and waivers. Although this appears to be an increase from FY 2005 of \$30.3 million, the projected spending in the current year for subsidies allowed will actually be \$33.2 million. Therefore the \$31.3 million proposed for next year would be about \$1.9 million or 6% less than FY '05 spending.

The budgetary allowance for the cost of maintenance and overhead for the Department of Housing and Community Development (line item 7004-0099) is also lower than the projected spending FY 2005. The current year spending is \$7.4 million and the amount proposed FY 2006 is \$6,816,299 which is a decrease of \$519,350 or 7% less than the current year. Accounting for inflation, the loss is about 9% from FY '05 to FY '06.

	% At or Below 50% of Area Median Income in Boston	% At or Below 80% of Area Median Income in Boston
White	23%	38%
Black	34%	56%
Latino	39%	60%



## Rental Assistance Programs

Rental assistance programs provide financial assistance to low-income persons that aid them in renting apartments outside of public housing developments. There are several types of rental assistance in Massachusetts. The two largest state funded programs are the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) and the Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP). Another large rental assistance program is the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program which is funded by the federal government through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Because Section 8 vouchers are federally funded, they will not be covered in this section.

### MRVP

The Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) is funded annually by the state legislature. Families are provided with “tenant-based” vouchers. Because tenant-based vouchers are mobile, and go with the tenant anywhere the family chooses to use them in Massachusetts, they are also known as “mobile vouchers.” If a household with a tenant-based voucher needs or wants to move to another rental unit, they can do so and use the voucher. The MRVP also uses vouchers called “project-based” vouchers that can only be used for specific apartments and for privately subsidized housing.

Eligibility for MRVP vouchers is determined by income, household size, household composition and geographic location. An applicant typically cannot make more than 200% of the federally established poverty level for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The following are income limits depending of number of individuals residing in a household and is determined by the Department of Housing and Community Development.

Number of Persons in Household	200% of
1	\$17,720
2	\$23,880
3	\$30,040
4	\$36,200
5	\$42,360
6	\$48,520
7	\$54,680
8	\$60,840

Those who are determined eligible and enroll in the MRVP program receive mobile or tenant based vouchers of varying amounts depending on the household income. Those receiving project based vouchers pay 35% of their income toward rent or 40% if heat is included in the rent. The voucher works as a subsidy and makes up the difference between the rent of the unit and what the tenant pays, though there are limits on the total rental amount.

Governor Romney’s House 1 Budget allows for level-funding FY 2006 at \$24.3 million for the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program, a real dollar decrease of about \$700,000 when inflation is considered. There have been significant changes, however, proposed for this program. First, the House 1 Budget proposes a re-

determination of both need and voucher value at six month intervals as opposed to the 12 month re-evaluation that exists currently. Some families may lose eligibility sooner under these new rules. The Governor's budget also suggests that the Department of Housing and Community Development not re-issue mobile vouchers upon turn-over, reducing the amount of families receiving them. Also, the House 1 Budget calls for a 36 consecutive month or 60 total month lifetime limit on receipt of rental assistance effective July 1, 2005. Finally, the work requirements for those receiving transitional aid to families with dependent children would be extended to those receiving MRVP aid.

#### AHVP

The Massachusetts Alternative Housing Voucher Program was created to provide rental assistance to persons living with disabilities that are 60 years in age or under. One must be eligible to live in elderly or disabled housing to receive these vouchers and earn no more than 80% of the area median income. The eligibility varies from region to region and from year to year. If determined eligible, one must pay 40% of their annual income towards rent if the rent includes all utilities and 35% if the rent includes no utilities. There are limits to the total rental amount allowed.

Due to the present cost of living in Massachusetts, the vouchers issued under the AHVP average \$570 per voucher or \$6,840 per person per year. At its inception in 2001, Massachusetts was able to fund 800 of such vouchers, but due to the rising costs of housing in the area, the re-issuance of vouchers was frozen and the budget severely cut, so as one family leaves the program, no new applicant can fill their place. The House 1 Budget provides level-funding for the FY 2006 budget. This is set at \$2.3 million for the FY 2005 and FY 2006 Budget. This does not account for inflation which results in a real dollar decrease of \$66,700. At the time of this program's inception, the program was funded for 800 vouchers and budgeted for \$4 million. Today, the program is only funded for 300-350 vouchers yet only uses 238 (DHCD).

#### RAFT

Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) provides financial assistance for homeless families and families at-risk of homelessness. The financial assistance provided under RAFT cannot exceed a one time aid of \$3,000 per family. This money can be used only for a security deposit, first month's and last month's rent, moving expenses and the cost to set up utilities. This amount is to be determined by the Department of Housing and Community Development, and the family's income cannot exceed 130% of the federal poverty level.

The funding for Raft in FY 2005 was \$2 million, and it is level-funded for the FY 2006 budget. This provides a real dollar decrease of around \$40,000. The funding allotted for FY 2005 is likely to run out in the next few weeks illustrating how low the funding is for this program.

#### *Other Cuts in Rental Assistance:*

- House 1 proposes \$2 million for the DMH Rental subsidy program, which provides a rental subsidy for eligible clients of the Department of Mental

Health (7004-9033). This is the same as the amounts appropriated for the past three fiscal years.

- House 1 proposes \$821,925 for Housing Services and Counseling to help families retain their housing (7004-3036), the same funding as in FY 05. House 1 does not earmark any of this appropriation for the Housing.

### **Homelessness**

Another effect of the rising housing costs in Massachusetts, especially within the greater Boston area, is a rise in homelessness. It is stated that in the city of Boston, for every six homeless individuals that leave the system and find a home, seven take their place. (Friends of the Shattuck Shelter, 2004) Women, particularly minority women, are disproportionately represented among homeless families. Most, 87%, of heads of homeless families in Boston are female. The percent of white homeless individuals in Boston is estimated to be 31%, while approximately 30% of the area homeless are black and an estimated 32% are Latino (Boston Cares, 2004).

In 1988, the Institute of Medicine defined three different types of homelessness: chronic, temporary, and episodic. Chronic homelessness applies to those who are homeless for a year or longer and previously affected 10% of the population in Massachusetts. Episodic homelessness also affected just about 10% of the population and is defined as those who experience periodic instances of homelessness that last a short amount of time. The largest groups were those who were classified as temporarily homeless. Temporary homelessness affects nearly 80% of the homeless population and is defined as one who experiences a short period of homelessness and does not return to the system. Some estimates now suggest that close to 40% of Boston's homeless population can be considered "chronic" (USCM, 2004). This is due, in part, to a severe cut in state funded shelter beds added to a freeze on the federally funded section 8 voucher. Many of the homeless shelter beds that were cut were designated for single homeless adults with substance abuse problems.

### **Emergency Assistance Program**

The Emergency Assistance program provides emergency shelter and other housing services to families with children and pregnant to prevent homelessness. The benefits provided by the Housing Assistance Program services are for families who are at risk of becoming homeless or losing their current housing or for families approved of emergency shelter assistance. Temporary Emergency Shelter Placement is for eligible homeless families with no other "feasible housing options." Other feasible housing options include but are not limited to living with friends or relatives. (DTA)

To be determined eligible for Emergency Assistance (EA) you must be a family with one or more dependent children under the age of 21 or a pregnant woman with or without other children. Emergency Assistance is given to the unborn child or dependent child as well as certain family members living in the

household. Any children living with the family in need have to have lived there for at least 6 months prior to EA need.

There are also financial eligibility requirements for participation in the EA program. The two things taken into consideration are assets and income. Assets are considered money that one has either in the bank or in the pocket as well as certain property that one owns, for example a car. Income is considered money that one has coming in through wages and the like as well as unearned income such as Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children, Emergency Aid to Elders, Disabled, and Children and Social Security Income. Some assets and income are counted when determining eligibility and some are not. If a family has too many countable income or assets they will be ineligible.

The family's countable assets cannot exceed \$2,500. All of the following are considered assets by the Department of Transitional Assistance:

- bank accounts
- retirement accounts and pensions
- stocks and bonds
- cash value of life insurance and burial insurance policies
- part of the value of your car, but only if your car is worth a lot
- the value of any other vehicles you own
- value of any real estate you own other than your home
- income tax refunds (other than Earned Income Credit)
- cash

Allowable income for those considered eligible for emergency assistance must be less than the federal poverty level as shown in the chart below:

<b>EA Income Eligibility Standard</b> (Effective March 2004)		
<b>Family Size</b>	<b>Monthly Gross Income</b>	<b>Annual Gross Income</b>
1	\$776	\$9,310
2	1041	12,490
3	1306	15,670
4	1571	18,850
5	1836	22,030

6	2101	25,210
7	2366	28,390
8	2631	31,570

Your family is eligible for temporary emergency shelter if:

- you meet the financial eligibility requirements for Emergency Assistance
- you are homeless and can find nowhere else to live,
- you can show that no friends, relatives, or charitable organizations will take you in.

*Budgetary Issues Regarding Emergency Assistance*

The amount allotted for Emergency assistance for family shelters and services has been reduced from \$73.6 million FY 2005 to \$70.5 million FY 2006. It is stated that the budget was reduced to “meet projected caseload demand.” This is a decrease of \$3.1 million or 4%. The program also gives the DTA the ability to fund pilot programs focused on reducing reliance on emergency housing, even if they do not promote permanent housing. The DTA could also make cuts in benefits and eligibility without advance notice to the State. Also, and possibly more concerning, the Governor’s budget proposes an elimination of the six month grace period for those families living in shelters that reach or cross the poverty line. Last year the State legislature adopted a proposal that allowed families living in shelters whose income goes over the poverty level to stay in the shelter for six months. This allowed the family a six month period to “escrow the ‘extra’ money” (MLRI, 2005) and use those funds to transition into permanent housing. The FY 2006 budget proposal eliminates this.

The budget allotment for adult homeless shelter funding will increase FY 2006 growing from \$30 million in 2005 to \$32.8 million. There are to be drastic cuts in the budget, however, for Emergency Transitional Assistance. Emergency Transitional Assistance is responsible for most of the programs associated with ‘welfare.’ Unemployment benefits account for much of the budget, and in this economic time these benefits are incredibly important. The Governor’s budget, however, cut the funds by over \$10 million. This program was funded at \$69.6 million FY 2006 and proposed funding for FY 2006 is \$58.2 million and states “reduced funding consistent with reform.” Teen living assistance will be level-funded at \$6.1 million.

<b>*Line Item</b>	<b>Line Item</b>	<b>FY 06 House 1</b>	<b>FY 05</b>	<b>FY 01</b>
Housing and Community Dev. Ops	7004-0099	6,816,299	7,335,649	7,872,854
Housing Services and Counseling	7004-3036	821,925	821,925	1,406,000
Service Coordinators Program	7004-4314	490,401	490,401	650,000
Subsidies to Public Housing Authorities	7004-9005	1,315,669	3,190,049	32,273,920
Mass Rental Voucher Program	7004-9024	24,283,345	24,283,345	41,434,329
Transitional Rental Assistance Program	7004-9030	2,300,000	2,300,000	4,000,000
Chapter 707 Rental Assistance	7004-9033	2,000,000	2,000,000	-----
Interest Subsidies for Priv. Dev. In Affordable Housing	7004-9201	5,500,000	5,500,000	8,166,571
Rental asst for families in transition	7004-9316	2,000,000	2,000,000	-----
Low income housing tax credit	7004-9315	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,108,420
Emergency Assistance-Family Shelters and Services	4403-2120	73,637,389	70,447,326	41,435,536
Emergency Transitional Assistance	4408-1000	69,571,154	58,156,361	41,858,752
Teen Structured Settings Program	4403-2119	6,063,317	6,121,675	6,224,206
Homeless Individuals Assistance	4406-3000	30,000,000	32,849,762	34,940,129

\* Table figures from Massachusetts State Budget FY 2001. For FY 2005 and FY 2006 from projected FY 2005 spending and FY 2006 House 1 proposal.

## *Criminal Justice*

Public safety is a reasonable goal for any community and Massachusetts has sought to achieve this by allocating increasingly larger sums to the Department of Public Safety for crime prevention programs, better witness services and technological advances to investigate crimes, and prisons and penalty implementation for criminals. Since the September 11, 2001 attacks, the Public Safety budget has increased even more to include Homeland Security. Although many of the criminal justice programs currently funded are to enhance safety and security, the actual spending raises questions about our criminal justice priorities; funding to prevent crime versus funding to further penalize offenders instead of rehabilitation.



The Fiscal Year 2006 Massachusetts State Budget proposes an allocation of \$1.03 billion toward the area of public safety and criminal justice line items. This is a 1.8% increase over last year, which is not quite keeping up the rate of inflation (Budget Monitor, 18). Criminal justice allocations are still greater than those for education and healthcare. The broad category for Health and Human Services is allocated more than criminal justice and public safety; however, if separated from human services, the strictly healthcare items are not funded at as high a rate as public safety.

The Department of Corrections has the largest proposed allocation (\$444 million) within the Department of Public Safety. An additional \$6.5 million is allotted for the general operating costs of the Criminal History System Board (CHSB) and \$3.1 million is for telecommunications and information technology.

### **Department of Corrections**

The Department of Corrections (DOC) budget has continued to increase over the past decade. Taxpayers' dollars are being spent more on maintaining state prisons than on supplying teaching materials in schools and ensuring that vital social services are funded. The implications of such findings lead the community to question why the incarceration rate is so high and if there are ways to increase safety while decreasing the amount allocated to this department. In other words, if more effective prevention programs, including public education, keep more people from turning to crime to begin with this might be a better investment.

With 80% of those convicted under mandatory sentencing laws in Massachusetts blacks and Latinos, communities may wonder if there is a link between this statistic and the condition of their schools. Since blacks and Latinos are also disproportionately convicted of drug offenses, communities may also hypothesize that investment in healthcare, including rehabilitation programs for

drug offenders, is a better investment than more money to house prisoners. It is estimated that our government spends over \$41,000 a year to house one inmate. However, the majority of prisoners are still required to buy their own clothes and toiletries from the DOC commissary. DOC uses this money as income, thus adding to the wealth provided this department by the state budget's allocation.

A possible way to reduce the number of prisoners is to review the mandatory sentencing policy. Currently, those convicted of non-violent drug offenses are serving long sentences with little chance of parole. In 1995, the legislature created a commission, headed by then Assistant Majority Whip Rep. Emanuel Serra (D-Boston), to review mandatory sentencing guidelines throughout the state and draft legislation to give judges more discretion in sentencing practices. The commission found that mandatory sentences are ineffective practices in deterring and preventing crime. They also found that prison overcrowding was the result of the mandatory sentences required for drug offenders, thus contributing to the state's budget crisis (NDSN, 2005).

In a 1998 study, William N. Brownsberger, J.D. argued that "mandatory sentencing laws are wasting prison resources on non-violent, low-level offenders and reducing resources available to lock up violent offenders" (Brownsberger, 1998). This study also concluded that Blacks and Latinos account for 85% of drug-related offenses. The black and Hispanic state prison admission rates for drug offenses are 39 and 81 times higher than the white rate, respectively (Brownsberger, 1998). "According to the study, a person who lives in a neighborhood designated by the federal government as an "extreme poverty" area is 19 times more likely to be incarcerated for a drug offense than someone who lives in a non-poverty area. The study shows that in poverty areas, 1 in 6 adult minority men will experience state prison incarceration before the age of 40." This study highlights the overwhelming proportion of blacks and Latinos that are affected by the mandatory sentencing laws.

Senator Cynthia Creem of Newton has introduced S. 167 to "make individuals with mandatory minimum drug sentences eligible for parole after serving two-thirds of their sentence in prison, matching the current eligibility standards for those convicted of violent crimes" (League of Women Voters). This bill, if passed, would also apply to those offenders currently in prison. Each offender's case would be reviewed by the Parole Board to either grant or reject the request, but there would be a greater overall chance of parole instead of a prolonged prison sentence for most of these non-violent drug offenses. "More than 30% of the state's prisoners are in jail for drug offense, costing the state \$84 million" (DPFMA, 2005). Senator Creem estimates that passage of such legislation could save the State of Massachusetts approximately \$15 million a year because it only costs about \$4000 a year to supervise someone on parole as opposed to spending \$41,000 a year to house the individual in a prison cell.

Additionally, it is estimated that the number of Massachusetts prisoners would be reduced, thus addressing the current issue of overcrowding; there are 22,000 inmates in spaces designed for the housing of only 16,000 inmates (The Boston Globe, 2004). The Sentencing Commission has projected that one-third of those



currently serving mandatory drug sentences could be eligible for parole (Brymmer, 2004).

The racial disparities in mandatory sentencing policies for drug offenses are most evident when comparing the areas where sentences are most harsh (school zones) and the quantity of drugs found on the offender. A 1993 study concluded that those individuals convicted of drug possession are “disproportionately low-income, and African-American or Hispanic” (TSP, 1993). Typically, these low-level offenders (street pushers) face longer incarceration sentences as opposed to the more “connected” drug distributors. These higher-level offenders are able to make deals with the government to reduce their sentences in exchange for information used to track down major drug dealers and distributors. The high number of minorities incarcerated for drug trafficking is misleading in that there is a perception that minority populations use and rely on drugs more than other populations. It is important to note that this is not a direct causal relationship because research has shown that although African-Americans and Latinos nationally represent 56% and 23% of incarcerated drug offenders, respectively, this is significantly greater than their respective national rates (13% and 9%) of overall drug use within these populations (King and Mauer, 2002).

In Massachusetts, persons arrested for drug crimes in minority-majority, dense, urban areas more often take place within 1,000 feet of a schoolhouse and are subject to a mandatory two-year prison sentence enhancement, than their suburban, white counterparts (DPFMA, 2005). “Mandatory sentences range from two years for drug possession with intent to distribute if the offender is caught within 1,000 feet of a school to 15 years in prison for sale of 200 grams of cocaine or more” (The Boston Globe, 2004). The state’s Sentencing Commission reports that 82% of the 302 defendants convicted of school-zone offenses in 1999 were black or Hispanic. In Suffolk and Hampden counties, which accounted for 64% of these sentences imposed statewide, minorities represented 89% and 90% of school-zone convictions, respectively (MPFMA, 2005). A study of the abundance of school zones in urban and minority neighborhoods compared to the number of school zones in upper- and middle-class suburban neighborhoods can help put the racial disparities in perspective. With more schools in urban areas, it is more likely that drug offenders in those areas will be subject to harsher penalties because of their constant proximity to school-zones.

Having a criminal history can be a barrier to getting a job or housing. Most health insurance is offered through employers. In Massachusetts, The Criminal Offender Record Information Act, or CORI, exacerbates the problem of the criminal history barrier.

### **CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information) Act**

The Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) Act was created in 1972 to protect the privacy rights of people with criminal records to potential employers. Access was strictly limited to government agencies as CORI reports were equivalent to background checks. Amended in 1996 to give more agencies access to the state’s database, the CORI Act allowed agencies working with and serving

vulnerable populations to view criminal records of potential employees. As with many government amendments, lawmakers intended to protect these vulnerable populations (children, disabled person, and the elderly) by ensuring that hired employees and potential employees would not have a prior criminal record involving any of these populations (Lombardi, 2003).

The result was intended to make the workplace and these populations safe from harm. Additionally, public housing authorities have access to CORI records to assist in screening applicants for public housing or Section 8. Furthermore, the CORI Act was amended again in November 2002 mandating schools, camps, and youth groups to retrieve CORI reports on employees and volunteers with “direct and unmonitored contact with children” (Lombardi, 2003). In recent years, the Department of Public Safety has continued to receive increasing amounts of money in the state budget to provide these reports. However, the adverse affects of CORI information and practices has led legislators to advocate that the priority of this spending go toward increased accuracy measures before distributing this information.

The Massachusetts Criminal History Systems Board (CHSB) is responsible for the tracking and maintenance of criminal history information in the state. The CHSB has a significant amount of power in that it regulates and approves the agencies that are allowed access to CORI information and reviews disputes of use and dissemination of CORI. In addition, the CHSB is charged with ensuring the accuracy and enhancing the quality of criminal history information in the database (Heigham, 2002). The number of CORI requests processed increased from 83,000 each month in 2002 to 125,000 a month by early 2003(Lombardi, 2003). The number of agencies certified to receive CORIs has also inflated from 2000 agencies in 1993 to over 9000 public and private agencies in 2003 (Lombardi, 2003). In 2003, the CHSB was expected to process at least 1.5 million CORI reports (Warren, 2003).

The constant increase in requests coupled with the method used for retrieving CORI information has adverse effects on people in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts with a criminal record because the information is not adequately verified before being distributed to the third party. The identifying information used in a subject’s CORI report should (as it was believed when the CORI Act was drafted) be based on: person’s full name, maiden name or alias, address, mother’s maiden name, father’s name, date of birth, social security number, and a listing of any state the subject has lived in over the past 10 years. In reality, only a person’s name, alias, and date of birth are currently checked.

Because CORI records are not retrieved by unique identifier such as social security number, there is a chance that someone with a common name may be affected by someone else’s CORI in a case of mistaken identity. Likewise, because CORI reports on all contacts with police, not just arrests and convictions, a person may at times get away with giving someone else’s name and birth date to police. There is currently no recourse for an innocent person to correct this information. Agencies that retrieve CORIs do NOT have to allow the person queried to provide any explanation of the information. Potential employees are often not hired due to a "bad" CORI, and sometimes they are not even aware of the information

provided. These misfortunes within CORI have caused a number of people to advocate for more accurate information and due process in disputing the information provided. Legislators have been made aware of the current failings in the CORI system and are acting on behalf of their constituents to hold the CHSB more accountable.

There are instances where ex-substance abusers were convicted of crimes committed while they were intoxicated. Similarly, some people who were previously homeless committed crimes as a means of survival (i.e. committing petty thefts for money or arrested for trespassing when in need of shelter). While their actions were no doubt criminal, this information on their CORI reports are damaging when these people attempt reentry into the workforce or housing communities; as stated before, the lack of a subject's knowledge of what is on the CORI report leaves little, if any, chance to explain the situation.

State Senator Dianne Wilkerson of Roxbury proposed Senate Bill 1397, to amend Line Item 8000-0110 of the budget and hold the Criminal History Systems Board accountable for reviewing the accuracy of CORI information before disseminating the results to any third-parties. The CORI subject would also be mailed a copy of the report to view the information provided to the third-party and have the opportunity to dispute any of the information provided (Lombardi, 2003). Fortunately, this bill was passed in FY 2005 and the CHSB is in the process of implementing these recommendations and adjustments to the system (Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, 2005).

State Representative Ben Swan (D-Springfield) also sponsored legislation, House Bill 1063, to "mitigate the harm done to people with CORI records by prohibiting the inclusion of charges that have been dropped or found baseless (Lombardi, 2003)." Since CORIs include all court-generated information, cases that have ended favorably for the subject still have "negative" information on the report. For instance, when the subject has been found not guilty or the charges have been dropped, this information still remains on the report thus giving the third-party more information about the subject's criminal record history than needed. This information is a clear violation of the subject's privacy, especially since there was no conviction of a crime, but the mere mention of the person's name in association with the crime can be damaging.

Though there have been positive movements toward reforming CORI in the past several years, there has been no comprehensive bill to address all flaws to the system. CORI is still adversely affecting Massachusetts residents seeking jobs, housing, loans, a college education, or even those who wish to be foster children. To address the need for comprehensive form and quick implementation, the Union of Minority Neighborhoods has started the Massachusetts Alliance to Reform CORI (MARC). Through this alliance, they work with state legislators and other advocacy groups in support of reform.

The following table summarizes some of the line items discussed above. It includes the recommendations of Governor Romney for FY2006, a comparison to the current fiscal year allotment, and the percent change between the two. FY01 funding is included as a reference for comparison.

<b>*Line Item</b>	<b>FY06 House 1</b>	<b>FY05</b>	<b>Change FY06- FY05</b>	<b>FY01</b>
Criminal History Systems Board (CHSB) 8000-0110	2,826,982	2,560,647	+10%	3,197,507
CHSB Telecommunications and Information Technology 8000-1122	3,117,681	2,842,661	+10%	3,510,671
Department of Corrections Facility Operations 8900-0001	435,882,293	432,648,608	+<1%	317,355,950
County Correctional Programs 8910-0000	176,620,595	133,668,218	+32%	154,690,207

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\* Table figures from Massachusetts State Budget FY 2001. For FY 2005 and FY 2006 from projected FY 2005 spending and FY 2006 House 1 proposal.

## *Current Involvement in Budget Process/Statehouse*

There are many grassroots, nonprofit, and advocacy organizations that track statehouse and budget activities relevant to one or all of the four topics covered in this report. For some organizations this is a primary activity of the organization, or a department within the organization. For others, only activities related directly to the organizations' primary mission is followed. We were introduced to some of these organizations through our research, primarily through contacts the Union of Minority Neighborhood made for us. Though much of the relevant information these organizations provided us is incorporated into sections above, a list of these organizations and a brief description of their work is provided here.

- The Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center (MBPC) analyze how the budget as well as tax policy affects low income people. They also do some analysis for other targeted minority groups, such as women. They disseminate this information to grassroots organizations, legislators, and the media, rather than directly to affected groups. Their funding comes from foundations (e.g. the Ford Foundation) and to a lesser extent unions and individuals. We met with Alyssa Na'im and Noah Berger at the MBPC office on February 23, 2005.
- The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Massachusetts chapter is a membership organization for social workers. They have a lobbying/advocacy component and we met with Nasreen Shabli on February 28, 2005. NASW Massachusetts sets a legislative agenda each year. They have twelve areas of legislative advocacy for 2005 which includes social work professional issues, healthcare, tax policy, and minimum wage standards among others. NASW lobbies on behalf of social workers as professionals as well as on behalf of the populations their member social workers serve. They also maintain an email alert list through which they inform members of issues before legislation for which a call to their representative would be appropriate.
- Health Care for All (HCFA) is a healthcare advocacy organization working to improve healthcare and healthcare access in Massachusetts. We met with Dan Delaney, their director of minority health policy on January 31, 2005. His work involves addressing health disparities as well as projects such as the physician diversity project which attempts to increase the percentage of minority healthcare providers. HCFA sponsors several different listserves to alert interested members of the public about advocacy issues as well as HCFA sponsored events and meetings. They are also a major supporter of the Health Care Affordability Act.
- The Public Policy Institute is an organization dedicated to "strengthening generation of activists for social change." They do this through workshops which are open to nonprofits and coalitions as well as individual coaching sessions. They also have several publications (primarily in book form) for purchase that serve as lobbying guides and give advice for affecting policy change. We did not have the chance to meet with a representative from

this organization, so our information about their activities has come from their website [www.realclout.org](http://www.realclout.org).

- The Massachusetts Human Services Coalition puts out a People's Budget each year. We again did not meet with any representatives of this group, though we did refer to their website at [www.cutnomore.org](http://www.cutnomore.org). Their stated constituency are the vulnerable and at-risk people within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts who benefit from the programs of Health and Human Services. Because their constituency does not fit exactly with the committees we are concerned with, the focus of the information produced on their website was not as relevant to our report as the budget analysis of some other groups. However, due to the nature of their work, it is worth mentioning their work as one more source of budget analysis for interested parties.

This is of course not a comprehensive list, but rather a sampling of organizations whose work is related to our research.

In the course of our research, we also tried to determine what tools, if any, these organizations had for helping their constituencies understand the budget and/or legislative process. Though the scope of our research did not allow us to do a comprehensive search for these tools and publications, those we did find are listed here with a brief overview of their strengths and limitations as tools for our primary constituency, low-income minority neighborhoods.

- NASW has a brochure called "A Guide to the Massachusetts State House and General Court" which provides a lot of good information about the physical layout of the statehouse (including maps) and the process for becoming more involved in monitoring statehouse activities. Unfortunately, it is not widely available. It is sold (for \$2) primarily at conferences and educational programs they sponsor.
- The State of Massachusetts has valuable information on their website including information on how the budget process works and access to current and past budgets. What is missing, of course, is an analysis of how the budget may be expected to affect different communities and constituencies.
- The Union of Minority Neighborhoods has a collection of material that they provide to participants in their workshops. Much of this information is geared toward helping citizens and community leaders understand the political process and become more effective at lobbying.
- As mentioned above, the Public Policy Institute runs workshops and publishes lobbying-oriented books. Their website, as well, provides some general useful information.

Because most of the organizations and tools listed above are not geared specifically or directly to low-income minority citizens of Massachusetts, the Union of Minority Neighborhoods felt that our work in synthesizing the work of some of these other organizations into material that is intended for these

communities was vital. The assessment that there is a gap in between many of these organizations and minority communities was confirmed by many of the people we spoke with. We took our research outlined above and created a one page (two-sided) fact sheet to inform minority communities of the highlights of our research and to promote the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Black Advocacy Day.

Black Advocacy Day is a lobby day organized by the Union of Minority Neighborhoods to provide a chance for minorities to come to the statehouse, meet with legislators, and learn about how to get more involved in the political processes that affect them. It is our hope that our fact sheet will give members of the community incentive to come learn more and that some of the other information contained in our report will be useful in furthering the knowledge and engagement of minority communities in the budget and legislative process.

There is an alarming amount of racial disparity that exists in Massachusetts in terms of income, condition of schools, percent of income spent on housing expenses, health and healthcare, and criminal justice repercussions. We believe the budget should reflect a priority of somehow leveling these disparities. Our values are reflected in how we spend our money. An increased focus and funding on preventive strategies would be both cost-effective and responsible. Early in our research we had a chance to visit the offices of the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center. With previous understanding of how budget policy adversely affects communities of color, we asked from where the money should be drawn to fund programs needed by these communities. We asked what areas of the budget were over-funded, or taking money away from more fair allocations. Noah Berger, executive director of MBPC, told us that it was difficult to say that some line-items were over-funded or unworthy of funding. Instead, if we value a program or department, we have to find the money to fund it. Because of this, revenues and tax policy are also a primary focus of MPBC's research. We believe that it is imperative to evaluate whether tax cuts and corporate loopholes have been prioritized above funding programs that aim to eliminate disparity. We also must discern whether tax-payer money is being spent as effectively as possible, for example by focusing on prevention. We expand on this in the summary and recommendations sections below.

## *Summary*

In the course of our research we have discovered that many preventive programs within each of the subject areas are being neglected and/or downsized in favor of programs that focus on a remedy or dealing with current circumstances. It is our position that preventive programs play an integral role in ensuring social equity and should not be diminished. This position comes from studies such as those cited by Child and Family Canada in a fact sheet outlining why early education is important. Their fact sheet sources several different studies and contends that good early education programs can help children develop both intellectually and socially and prevent the need for more spending special education, welfare, and crime later on (CFC, 2005). Although it is outside the scope of our program to do a detailed inventory of such studies or to address the possible economic gains to be had from investments in health, education, and housing programs for children, we have looked at many of the budgetary issues through the lens of “prevention first.”

In criminal justice, there has been a reduction in funding for education. These programs are incredibly important in reducing recidivism in our state’s prison system. Almost all of the state-funded homelessness prevention programs were eliminated from the budget more than a decade ago. The funding for homeless prevention now is minimal. Also, funding for head start and early education programs is being reduced at the federal level. The state’s budget does not allow for an appropriate allocation to meet the growing need with 12% of the children in Massachusetts under the poverty level. Also, screenings and public health education programs have been under-funded.

When any group lobbies the government to appropriate more money to certain programs, it is important to designate from where the money will come. In the past years there has been an incredible increase in funding for Public Safety, Homeland Security included. It is *not* our opinion that money allotted to Public Safety should be decreased but instead certain tax rates should not be cut and that the corporate tax loophole should be closed.

In the House 1 Budget, Governor Romney proposes to cut the personal income tax from 5.3% to 5.0%. This reduction would result in the loss of approximately \$225 million for the FY 2006 and increase to a loss of thereabouts \$550 million in FY 2007 (Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center, 2005). This tax cut would disproportionately benefit the wealthiest households in the state. The wealthiest fifth of Massachusetts state residents would derive benefit from almost two-thirds of this tax reduction. Those in the bottom fifth, however, will gain less than 1% of the \$550 million, and on top of that, only one in every five taxpayers in this income bracket will gain anything at all from the tax cut (MBPC, 2005). Income Support programs are being cut (in nominal dollars) by \$20.2 million, Medicaid and other Health care programs by \$348.9 million, environmental affairs by \$60.2 million, Housing and Community Development by \$6.4 million and finally Economic Development by \$4.6 million (MBPC, 2005). This is not accounting for inflation. While the Governor is proposing cutting funding for various social



programs by \$442.2 million dollars (not accounting for inflation), it is hard to understand why this administration would suggest cutting the personal income tax.

Governor Romney's proposed legislation to close corporate tax loopholes is at least a good step in addressing revenue sourcing, though it would not restore revenues to the pre-tax-cut level. According to the current administration, the passing of this legislation would allow for \$170 million, or about 70% of what the Commonwealth will lose from reductions in the income tax, in FY 2006 (MBPC, 2005). The increased revenue would come from a few different provisions such as improved investigations of corporate income distortions, an "intangible software" sales tax, increased penalties for tax evasion, and reform of deed excise tax regulations for companies.

## *Recommendations*

There are many reasons why the mobilization of communities of color is difficult. Disenfranchisement, disempowerment, and lack information often contribute to a dearth in participation. The lack of trust in the process, in representatives, in information that neighborhoods and community members are provided with make it imperative to include trusted leaders in the community when attempting to improve citizen participation in the area.

Though there are many non-profit groups that perform budget analysis and its effect on communities of color, this information is not readily accessible to the individual. The language of the budget and other legislative pieces can be difficult to understand. As mentioned in the previous section, we have developed a fact sheet to incite interest in the second annual Black Advocacy Day. This will be disseminated to the *Bay State Banner*, neighborhood groups, aldermanic chairpersons in communities of color, non-profit groups whose constituency are people of color, and church leaders within communities of color. By casting a wider net, we hope to increase participation in this year's Black Advocacy Day. We will also develop an information sheet to be handed out at this event outlining important pieces of legislation, a description of budget line items and their importance, as well as information on how these effect individuals within communities of color.

In addition, we recognize that Black Advocacy Day should not be the only means of providing information and engaging communities of color in civic participation. As we learned from legislators and other state representatives, these communities need to constantly receive information that directly affects them and the budget. There are a number of agencies that monitor the state budget from House 1 to the final version and decipher the spending priorities. However, this information needs to be translated once again for understanding by everyday citizens and then disseminated on a regular basis. Communities of color do not necessarily need to become experts on the budget process, but they do need to be informed of budgetary spending and its effects on services that they may deem vital. Without providing this information to these communities, it is unrealistic to expect informed civic participation. Therefore, we recommend additional strategies to engage communities of color in civic participation:

- Additional workshops through the union of Minority Neighborhoods on the state budget process. Participants can learn deadlines, important terminology, and view the current spending to understand state priorities.
- Additional programming at the State House that enlists the help and support of state representatives and involves communities of color more than once a year. Example: Open Offices where state representatives are available all day to meet with anyone to discuss any issues. This will also be advantageous in demystifying the role of state representatives.

There is also a need for further research, some of which could be conducted by a future Field Projects Team. Each topic in this report is worthy of more in-depth research. What we have done with our research is confirm a need to translate

budget information into language anyone can understand. With our fact sheet and outreach efforts in support of Black Advocacy Day we have experimented with one way getting some of this translated budget information into the hands of members of minority communities. We will not be part of this project long enough to evaluate our long-term effectiveness, but we recognize that one semester's efforts are not a sustainable solution. We hope that future researchers can build on our work to find a way to systematically and comprehensively reach communities of color with the information they need to effectively engage in the budget process.

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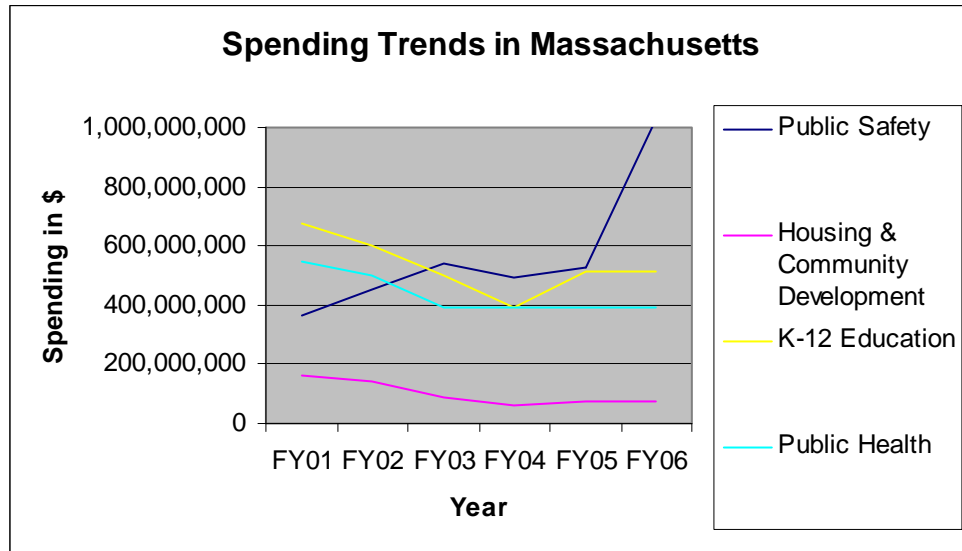
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# Appendices

## Appendix A.



Overall spending trends in the state of Massachusetts within the four areas of focus.



Appendix B. Fact Sheet.

Where Will *You* Be On **May 3, 2005**?  
**Black Advocacy**  
**Day**

State House  
From 9am-4pm



Put your mouth  
where your  
**money** is.

Come to  
Black Advocacy  
Day  
on May 3, 2005 and  
make **YOUR** voice  
heard by your  
representatives.

**All are welcome!**

**Know the facts**

- Approximately a half million Massachusetts residents are uninsured. While 8% of the overall population is uninsured, 14% of blacks and 22% of Hispanics have no health coverage. This disparity is reflected in other health outcome trends. For example:
  - White women are more likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer, but black women are more likely to die of the disease.
  - And in Boston, black men diagnosed with prostate cancer are 2.5 times more likely to die from the disease than their white counterparts.
- Yet the governor is currently proposing funding for the breast cancer screening and education program at an amount that does not even keep up with inflation and prostate cancer screening and prevention programs have seen a 93% decrease over the past five years.

- Not only does the Governor propose to extend the work requirements of those receiving Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children and EAEDC benefits to those in the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program, the governor would eliminate the following exemptions to the work requirement for all programs:
  - Family where the parent is needed to care for a disabled family member
  - A pregnant women in her third trimester
  - Teen in school
  - Family that has a child between 1 and 2
  - Family where a parent is disabled
- Families AT the poverty level no longer eligible for emergency shelter.
- Section 8 Vouchers are being severely cut by the Federal Government. State funded voucher programs have not been increased to accommodate for this loss.
- The Governor has proposed to increase funding public education by approximately \$77 million or 2% in FY 2006. However, this amount remains below the FY 2002 level by \$254.3 million.
- Fiscal Year 2006 funding allotted for state and community colleges, where 26% enrolled are students of color, has been cut by \$27.6 million.
- CORI reports are the current method of finding criminal history information. The CORI database only supplies court-generated information thus, any information of the arrest, release from prison, or end of parole is not included.
- CORI reports are sometimes inaccurate because of a criminal using an alias or an innocent person's name. In these situations, there is no current recourse for an innocent person to correct this information, thus continuing to have false charges appear on his/her CORI.
- Agencies that retrieve CORIs do NOT have to allow the person queried to provide any explanation of the information. Potential employees are often not hired due to a "bad" CORI, and sometimes they are not even aware of the information provided.
- There are an estimated 22,000-24,000 Massachusetts residents living with HIV/AIDS. Nationwide, HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of death for African-Americans aged 25-34. Funding for HIV/AIDS prevention, screening, outreach, and education has been cut 39% over the past five years. This despite the fact that the Massachusetts Department of Public Health has noted an increase in diagnosed cases of HIV over the same period.

For more information on Black Advocacy Day contact:  
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