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As I See It: Worcester's House Delegation: Working on Behalf of Residents During a Pandemic

For the past two years, though the State House has been closed to the public, the state legislature's work never ceased. Our offices continued to work on behalf of local residents, respond to the impacts of the pandemic, and push to make the greater Worcester area the best place in the Commonwealth.

As legislators, we have assisted thousands of local Worcester area residents in receiving the unemployment benefits they were entitled to, advocated for individuals experiencing housing instability, and filed legislation supporting vulnerable populations.

Recent accomplishments of the Worcester delegation:

- Secured hundreds of thousands of dollars in American Rescue Plan Act funding for local initiatives such as the Child Protection Program, the Worcester Regional Environmental Council, Indian Lake, Yes We Care, Dismas House, Friendly House, the Main

South Business Association, WorcShop, Main South Community Development Corporation, Creative Hub Worcester, Major Taylor Museum, and the Salisbury Cultural District

- Advocated for the city of Worcester to host a MassVax site
- Demanded accountability for the state's vaccine rollout from the Baker-Polito Administration
- Assisted with the disbursement of Community Empowerment and Reinvestment Grants
- Fought for equitable vaccine distribution

The work of the Massachusetts House of Representatives over the past two years, including monumental budgets and legislation:

- Balanced and passed both the FY21 and FY22 budgets, with investments targeted in housing, economic development, mental health services, and food security
- Passed An Act Providing for Massachusetts COVID-19 Emergency Paid Sick Leave, An Act Providing Access to Reproductive Health, An Act Promoting Awareness of Sewage Pollution in Public Waters, An Act Authorizing and Accelerating Transportation Investment, An Act Enabling Partnerships for Growth, An Act to Further Address Challenges Faced by Municipalities, School Districts and State Authorities Resulting from COVID-19, An Act Promoting a Resilient Health Care System that Puts Patients First, An Act to Regulate Sports Wagering, and the Fair Share Amendment
- Passed the \$4 Billion COVID-19 relief funding bill, which included \$500 payments for essential low-income workers
- Ensured that the Commonwealth remains on track for its seven-year commitment to fully fund the Student Opportunity Act

Additionally, this past Wednesday, the Massachusetts House passed the Work and Family Mobility Act. The bill passed 120-36 due to overwhelming concern that the Baker-Polito Administration would veto the bill. However, members of both the Massachusetts House and Senate have heard from constituents since 2003 about the legislation, which has shaped lawmakers' very strong, favorable opinions of the bill and its intent.

The historic legislation allows all Massachusetts residents, regardless of immigration status, to apply for a standard Massachusetts drivers license. It is important to note that under this bill, everyone must still pass the same driver's test, be registered and insured to drive, and provide proof of identity and Massachusetts residency to get a license.

The bill has the unanimous endorsement of the Massachusetts Major City Chiefs of Police Association and the support of many district attorneys and sheriffs across the state.

Sixteen states, including Connecticut, New York, Vermont, and Utah, have passed similar legislation and have seen a reduced number of hit-and-runs and uninsured drivers.

Driving is essential. Immigrant work is essential. Everyone, regardless of immigration status, deserves to safely get to work, run errands, and take their children to school.

The Massachusetts State House reopened to the public on February 22nd. We look forward to seeing our constituents, begin working on the FY23 budget, and continue to advocate for Worcester and its residents on Beacon Hill.

- Representatives James J. O'Day, Daniel M. Donahue, Mary S. Keefe, David H. A. LeBoeuf, John J. Mahoney