



FUND OUR FUTURE



Fund Our Future vs. Baker and Tucker Bills

In January, House and Senate legislators filed education funding bills supported by the MTA and the [Fund Our Future coalition](#). The *Promise Act* ([S.238/H.586](#)) would make significant changes to the preK-12 foundation budget, increasing state and local spending on public schools, while the *Cherish Act* ([S.741/H.1214](#)) would require the state to phase in significant higher education increases over the next five years.

Two other foundation budget bills were also filed in January: Governor Charlie Baker's school funding plan (H.70) and a House bill filed by Representative Paul Tucker (H.576).

MTA simulations show that when fully phased in, the *Promise Act* would generate three times as much additional state Chapter 70 aid for schools as the Baker bill. Three-quarters of the new funds would go to the districts that educate the poorest students.

In addition, H.70 includes punitive top-down mandates that are not part of either the *Promise Act* or the Tucker bill. The Tucker bill does not fully specify a foundation budget funding increase for educating low-income students, making it impossible to estimate how much new Chapter 70 funding it would generate.

The governor also filed higher education funding initiatives via his FY20 budget proposal (H.1). But neither his higher education funding plan nor H.70 goes nearly far enough to guarantee the public schools and colleges our students deserve.

PreK-12 PROPOSALS – FUNDING DIFFERENCES

The *Promise Act* would implement all of the recommendations of the Foundation Budget Review Commission along with other funding improvements.

- ✓ It fully implements the FBRC's recommendations for greater support for educating low-income students and attempts to generate a more accurate count of these students, thereby providing significantly more aid to low-income communities than the other bills. Like the other bills, it also increases funding for educating students with disabilities and English learners and to address the cost of health insurance for staff and retirees.
- ✓ It provides relief to certain districts that lose significant amounts of Chapter 70 aid to charter schools.
- ✓ It guarantees all districts minimum increases in aid each year — \$50 per student when fully implemented.
- ✓ While providing more support for every district, it directs three-quarters of the new funds to the districts with the highest shares of low-income students.

H.70 and the Tucker bill would implement three out of four of the FBRC's recommendations and fail to fully implement the changes recommended for teaching low-income students. Both bills would leave the minimum aid calculation to the annual budgeting process. The Baker bill would provide additional reimbursement — but less than what is provided under the *Promise Act* — to certain districts that lose funds to charter schools, though only the lowest-performing districts would be potentially eligible for the additional funds. Under the *Promise Act*, all charter school sending districts are potentially eligible. The Tucker bill does not provide any additional relief to sending districts.

All three bills would increase Chapter 70 funding. Statewide, the *Promise Act* would provide three times as much new Chapter 70 funding to cities and towns as Baker's bill.

Here are current estimates of how much each of the bills would increase Chapter 70 aid over baseline —

with baseline being the level that would have been reached without new legislation. These are the totals for the final year, presuming a seven-year phase-in.

- ✓ *Promise Act*: \$1.5 billion.
- ✗ Baker bill: \$510 million.
- ✗ Tucker bill: Cannot be calculated.

All three bills would also increase the foundation budget for each district.

The foundation budget is the state’s determination of the minimum level of expenditure required to provide an adequate education to all of a district’s students. It is unique to each district and varies primarily due to demographic differences (e.g., the number of English learners or low-income students) among districts. It is funded from required local contributions and state Chapter 70 funds. Based on the same analysis, in year seven the statewide foundation budget would increase:

- ✓ *Promise Act*: \$2.4 billion.
- ✗ Baker bill: \$1.1 billion.
- ✗ Tucker bill: Cannot be calculated.

PreK-12 PROPOSALS – TOP-DOWN MANDATES

H.70 includes punitive top-down mandates. It would give appointed state officials more power to impose their will on districts and increase bureaucratic red tape. It would:

- ✗ Give the commissioner of education the power to withhold funds from certain low-scoring districts as leverage to implement “reforms” supported by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
- ✗ Apply severe collective bargaining limitations currently in effect for “chronically underperforming” districts to a far greater number of so-called “underperforming” schools.

The *Promise Act* and Tucker bill do not include any new top-down mandates.

PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING PROPOSALS

Although the governor’s budget plan does acknowledge the need for a major reinvestment in public higher education, it is just a starting point. Rather than make \$100 million of it a one-time initiative directed at questionable programs, we believe it must be invested in the core educational mission of our colleges and universities and lead to freezing tuition and fees for students.

The *Cherish Act* calls for phasing in increases in campus and need-based scholarship funding over five years until they reach the level of per-student spending achieved in Fiscal Year 2001, adjusted for inflation.

- ✓ If this act were to be fully enacted in FY20, it would generate an estimated \$580 million for public higher education, setting a new baseline that would greatly increase college affordability, restore programs that have been cut, and fund fairer treatment of adjuncts and other staff.
- ✓ The funding levels generated by this act are in line with the recommendations of the 2014 Higher Education Finance Commission. Calculations based on those recommendations project that at least \$500 million more is needed to provide students and staff with the public higher education system they need to thrive.
- ✓ Tuition and fees would be frozen at current levels — as long as the state maintains its commitment to increasing funding each year for five years.

The governor’s higher education budget does not include any commitment to long-term increases to restore funding to previous levels. It does include:

- ✓ A 5.5 percent average increase for operating budgets.
- ✓ A one-time College Affordability and Success Trust Fund to be used for certain initiatives and scholarship programs — programs that may help a few students but do not solve the affordability problem for the vast majority. The fund, meant to be spent over three years, could be up to \$100 million, but the actual amount would depend on state revenue levels.

We have a once-in-a-generation chance to win the funding our schools and colleges deserve.

The *Promise Act* and the *Cherish Act* bring us much closer to that goal than either the governor’s proposals or the Tucker bill.

Read more about the *Promise Act* and the *Cherish Act* [HERE](#)