



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

House of Representatives

State House, Boston 02133-1054

**Representative Danillo A. Sena (37th Middlesex District)**

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan Sena'.

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# **An Act establishing free broadband internet access in public housing (H137)**

**Committee: Advanced Information Technology, the Internet and Cybersecurity**

## **Why is the bill important?**

- **The United Nations has declared that:**
  - **Health is a fundamental human right** indispensable for the exercise of other human rights
  - The right to health is closely related to and dependent upon the realization of other human rights, including the rights to food, housing, work, education, human dignity, life, non-discrimination, equality, the prohibition against torture, privacy, access to information, and the freedoms of association, assembly and movement
- **Internet access is necessary to receive telehealth, and is also closely connected to the rights** to work, education, human dignity, non-discrimination, access to information, and the freedoms of association, assembly and movement
- Benda et al. (2020) found broadband internet access to be a social determinant of health, which has become even more apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic
- People in public housing should not have to choose between spending a significant portion of their income on internet and the adverse health effects of not having broadband

## **What does the bill do?**

- **Names broadband internet as a human right and authorizes a Health Impact Assessment** by the Department of Public Health for the negative health impacts of lack of broadband internet access and the potential positive health outcomes of broadband internet access
- **Requires that public housing provide free broadband internet**, which will be funded by legislature, **as part of offering decent, safe, and sanitary dwellings**

# **An Act implementing an elementary and secondary interdisciplinary climate education curriculum in the commonwealth (H614)**

House joint presenter: Representative Jim Hawkins

Senate filer & bill number: Senator Julian Cyr, S311

Committee: Education

Supported by Our Climate, Massachusetts Climate Education Organization

## **Why is the bill important?**

- Climate change is the greatest global crisis of the 21st century
- We need to **ensure climate change and the environment is taught to our students** and taught in a comprehensive way that encapsulates the scientific and sociopolitical ramifications of climate change

## **What does the bill do?**

- **Requires History and Social Sciences curriculums to provide students with a deeper understanding of climate policy, climate justice, climate activism**, including:
  - Difference between effects on the Northern Hemisphere and the Southern Hemisphere
  - Massachusetts environmental justice communities
  - Historical and current environmental and climate movements
  - Links between environmental issues and severe health issues
  - Engagement with the community, civic leaders, and government officials in confronting climate change
- **Requires Science & Technology curriculums to provide students with a deeper understanding of anthropogenic climate change, equitable climate solutions, climate policy and climate activism**, including:
  - Human impact on the carbon cycle
  - Global warming's impact on the water cycle
  - Loss of forests on global scale from fire and land alteration for agriculture
  - How environmental problems impact human health, economics, and agricultural systems
- Final curriculum must include provisions to create assignments for students to directly contact their elected officials in support of an issue

# An Act Establishing An Elementary And Secondary School Robotics Grant Program (H700)

Senate filer & docket number: Senator John Velis, SD2559

Committee: Education

Supported by FRC 4905 Andromeda One, New England FIRST Robotics

Why is the bill important?

- The purpose of the robotics programs is to provide a platform for **elementary and secondary students** in public and charter schools to learn the disciplines to:
  - Help them achieve **higher test scores**
  - Attend and graduate college with a **major in science, technology, engineering, math**
  - **Be prepared for a workforce** demanding knowledge in those areas
- **Statistics** from FIRST Robotics (one of the included organizations)
  - 645,000 Students and 110+ Countries Participated in 2019-2020
  - FIRST team members are approximately twice as likely to show gains on STEM-related measures as comparison students
  - Participants from all major population groups and community types show **positive impacts, including males and females, multiple racial and ethnic groups, lower and higher income youth, and youth from urban, rural, and suburban communities**
  - **Impacts** on STEM attitudes and interests are significantly **greater for young women**
  - **Through the 3rd year of college**, 81% of FIRST alumni had declared a STEM major, 69% were majors in computer science or engineering, and **female FIRST alumni were majoring in engineering at the same rate (51%) as male alumni.**

What does the bill do?

- **Establishes a grant program** with varying dollar amounts for schools **ranging from \$435 to \$18,000** depending on age of students and characteristics of program
- **Public and charter elementary, middle, and high schools are eligible**
- Grant is **administered by** the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (**DESE**)

## An act providing for universal pre-k for 3- to 5-year-olds (H701)

Committee: Education

### Why is the bill important?

- **The current system** is too bureaucratic and way too expensive, with the average cost of \$14,000-\$21,000 per year per child being especially prohibitive for lower income families
- Studies show that **high-quality pre-K can advance children's linguistic, academic and social development**
- Research also suggests that pre-K programs reduce the need for special education placements, raise students' future incomes, lower incarceration rates and get parents back to work

### Examples of previous legislation this was based on:

- **There is currently fully universal Pre-K in Florida, Vermont, and Washington, DC**
  - Vermont – 10+ hours per week of publicly funded prekindergarten education available for 35 weeks annually to 3- and 4-year-olds
  - Florida – Pre-kindergarten available to all Florida 4-year-olds
  - Washington, DC - 2 years of universal, full-day preschool guaranteed, and more than 95 percent of DC's pre-K seats are in public schools
- Very high enrollment rates around 80% in Florida and 90% in DC

### What does the bill do?

- **The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC)** shall administer a Pre-K program that provides for **no fewer than 20 hours per week** of publicly funded Pre-K
- This Pre-K program shall be available each week public school is in session to each child who is from **2 years and 9 months of age to 5 years of age** who is not eligible for or enrolled in kindergarten operated by a public school
- Creates a **Pre-K Advisory Council within the Department of Early Education and Care** consisting of 11 members to assist the Office of Universal Pre-K in administering the Universal Pre-K program

## **An Act ensuring access to medications (H1201)**

Previously filed by Representative Jen Benson as H915 (2019-20)

Senate filer & bill number: Senator Jamie Eldridge, S664

Committee: Financial Services

Supported by Massachusetts Independent Pharmacist Association (MIPA), Massachusetts Pharmaceutical Association (MPHA), North East Pharmacy Services Corporation

### **Why is the bill important?**

- Independent pharmacies are being excluded from selling certain drugs because Pharmacy Benefit Managers, which link health insurance companies and pharmacies, **are saying that certain drugs are 'specialty drugs' and can only be dispensed by select preferred providers**
- **The definition of drugs that are specialty is arbitrary** based on Pharmacy Benefit Manager financial interests
- **Example of the current situation**
  - Person gets drug from local pharmacy
  - Product gets expensive and is labeled as specialty
  - The next day, the person can no longer get the drug from their local pharmacy and has to go to a Pharmacy Benefit Manager-approved pharmacy to get it
- Sometimes drugs require special handling and packaging, like the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, but these cases are few and far between
- **Specialty drugs make up 5% of the volume of drugs but 50% of the dollar volume of drug sales**

### **What does the bill do?**

- **Defines specialty drug** as prescription medications that require special handling, administration or monitoring
- **Creates process to license pharmacies as specialty pharmacies that can sell specialty drugs**

## **An Act to establish the Massachusetts works progress administration (H2052)**

**Senate filer & bill number: Senator Jamie Eldridge, S1186**

**Committee: Labor and Workforce Development**

### **Why is the bill important?**

- **Will resolve our heightened unemployment due to Covid-19 through creating jobs by putting people back to work right away**
- **Uses FDR's Great Depression-era Works Progress Administration as a model for economic recovery and growth**

### **What does the bill do?**

- **Establishes a Works Progress Program (WPA) within the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce that would receive project proposals submitted by various state departments and agencies**
- **4 project criteria:**
  - Creates multiple jobs
  - Individuals with the required skills are available
  - Continuing environmental or economic benefits after project is finished
  - Can be staffed with minimal delay
- **Projects can be in the areas of (but not limited to):**
  - Climate change resiliency
  - Environmental conservation
  - Creative economy
  - Agriculture
  - Food and beverage sectors
  - Infrastructure
  - Cannabis industry

## **An Act relative to the commonwealth's fire departments (H2771)**

Previously filed by Representative Jen Benson as H4104 (2019-20)

Senate filer & bill number: Senator Julian Cyr, S1686

Committee: Public Service

Supported by Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts

What does the bill do?

- **Indemnification:** financial coverage of reasonable hospital, medical, surgical, chiropractic, nursing, pharmaceutical, prosthetic, and more costs that arise as a result of a job
- **Extends indemnification of active and retired Police Officers and Firemen to more types of firefighters, including:**
  - Any permanent crash crewman, crash boatman, fire controlman or assistant fire controlman employed at Logan International Airport
  - Members of the Massachusetts military reservation fire department
  - Members of the 104th fighter wing fire department
- **Entitles members of the 104th fighter wing fire department or members of the Massachusetts military reservation to assumption that their heart and lung diseases and certain cancers came from their work**



## An Act relative to civil asset forfeiture data reporting (H3233)

House joint presenter: Representative Nicholas Boldyga

Senate filer & docket number: Senator Becca Rausch, S2105

Committee: State Administration and Regulatory Oversight

Supported by Digital Fourth, Restore the Fourth, American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts (ACLU)

### Why is the bill important?

- **The Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution** declares that “the right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated”
- **Under state and federal forfeiture laws, state law enforcement agencies can seize money and other property**, and state prosecutors can oversee the transfer of possession of that property and arrange for it to be sold
- The money and sale proceeds fund agency budgets
- Massachusetts has one of the lowest bars to forfeit - the government must only show probable cause that property is connected to a crime, whereas in many other states there are higher levels of certainty
- **It is the responsibility of state legislators to monitor seizures and forfeitures**, and this bill provides legislators with the information necessary for oversight

### Data on forfeitures:

- Between 2000 and 2018, Massachusetts law enforcement agencies generated **\$327 million in revenue** from state and federal forfeitures, or around \$15-20 million a year
- Massachusetts Civil Forfeiture Commission found:
  - Assets forfeited included US currency, car vehicles, scooters, Rolex watches, iPhones, shoe collections, tablets, computers, TVs, foreign/international currency, and GPS systems
  - **Most seizures reported were between \$1,000 and \$5,000**

### What does the bill do?

- **Requires the attorney general, each district attorney and each police department to file annual reports** with the treasurer **regarding all of their civil forfeitures**.
- **Reports shall include** a variety of information, including but not limited to:
  - **Date of seizure**
  - **Type of goods seized**
  - **Location of seizure**
  - **Estimated value of seizure**
  - **Nature and outcome of the arrest**
- Sets a fee for failure to file a report within 30 days of being due without good cause
- **Data collected will be public information** under the Freedom of Information Act

## **An Act removing barriers for Municipal Power Communities to become Green Communities (H3369)**

Senate filer & docket number: Senator Jamie Eldridge, S2171

Committee: Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy

### **Why is the bill important?**

- **The Green Community Designation and Grant Program provides a road map along with financial and technical support to municipalities that:**
  - pledge to cut municipal energy use by 20 percent over 5 years
  - do siting & permitting for alternative and renewable energy facilities
  - purchase fuel-efficient vehicles
  - adopt a more efficient building code (the “stretch energy” code)
- **Certain towns, like Boxborough, wish to become Green Communities but do not meet one of the program’s two ‘either/or’ requirements:**
  - Either have at least one household supplied by a for-profit electric utility
  - Or have the Municipal Light Plant charge residents of all towns it serves a monthly fee to go to the Renewable Energy Trust
- Under current rules, the Municipal Light Plant serving Boxborough would need to charge its users in Littleton, which is already a Green Community, an extra fee too
- **All towns in the 37th Middlesex District except for Boxborough are Green Communities**

### **What does the bill do?**

- Requires the Division of Energy Resources to issue regulations enabling communities served by Municipal Light Plants to participate in the Green Communities program
- A single community within a municipal light plant served region shall be allowed to participate in the program without agreement from the other served municipalities, so that they pay extra fees but the other municipality or municipalities do not

## **An Act relative to the military family advocacy program, domestic violence and child abuse and neglect (H3694)**

Senate filer & docket number: Senator Susan Moran, S2417

Committee: Veterans and Federal Affairs

Supported by the U.S. Department of Defense

### **Why?**

- **Connects the existing processes for addressing allegations of child abuse and neglect of the MA Department of Children and Family with those of the US Department of Defense, at the beginning of the adjudication process rather than at the end**
- **Helps the military to meet its goals for addressing domestic abuse and child abuse and neglect in military families**

### **What does the bill do?**

- **Requires Department of Children and Families (DCF) to collect information concerning military status of the spouse, intimate partner, parent or guardian of a child who is the subject of a domestic abuse or child abuse or neglect report**
- **Requires area directors at DCF to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the military family advocacy program at a local military installation to create protocols for investigations of cases of reported child abuse and neglect in military families**

## **Home Rule Petitions**

**An Act authorizing the town of Lunenburg to grant an additional license for the sale of all alcoholic beverages not to be drunk on the premises to Jaxx Country Variety (HD244)**

**An Act authorizing the investment of town of Lunenburg library trust funds (HD246)**

**An Act authorizing the town of Harvard to establish a cap on property taxes for means tested senior citizens (HD261)**