

January 2015

Boston's 2015-2016 Legislative Agenda

Highlighting selected legislative bills submitted by Mayor Walsh

The Mayor's legislative package for the 2015-2016 session of the Massachusetts General Court consists of 56 bills, of which 31 are new and 25 had been previously filed. The bills cover a range of issues in eight different policy categories such as housing, public safety, education, government efficiency and transportation. A short summary of selected bills are highlighted below. More bills will be described in the February *Bureau Update*.

Housing

- To support the development of affordable middle-income/workforce housing, a bill would provide a property tax incentive to private developers within designated special tax assessment zones. Developers would not pay property taxes during the two-year construction phase and then phase-in the full tax payment over four years. This incentive would slightly limit growth of the residential property tax levy during this time.
- To provide a source of funding for affordable elderly housing, a bill would ensure that a percentage of the state's Affordable Housing Trust Fund would be allocated to elderly housing. Low-income senior households are expected to represent two-thirds of senior household growth in Boston by 2030.
- In order to make affordable and middle-income/workforce housing a feasible option for developers, a bill would allow municipalities to petition the Commonwealth to designate certain state-owned properties as

surplus and then petition the state to dispose of surplus properties below fair market rate when affordable and workforce housing restrictions are placed on the properties.

- A bill that defines what a blighted property is and creates a process by which a municipality can foreclose on properties that are deemed blighted.

Public Safety

- A bill would authorize the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department to assume responsibility for all Boston region post booking transports and provide a lockup facility to hold all prisoners in the region. More Boston and regional police officers could be assigned to higher priority public safety duties with this bill and it would result in cost savings to regional police departments.
- Reflecting the increased danger associated with shooting firearms into dwellings and into school buildings, a bill would create a one-year sentence for individuals convicted of this type of shooting.

Government Efficiency

- To ensure that the Commonwealth and municipalities receive the full taxable amount due from the online sale of hotel and motel rooms, a bill would require online resellers to calculate the occupancy tax based on the retail price they charge the customer, not the lower wholesale cost they pay to the hotel.