



*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*  
*House of Representatives*  
*State House, Boston 02133-1054*

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## **Rep. Smola supports \$1.7B bond bill to fund information technology upgrades, public safety improvements**

**BOSTON – Representative Todd M. Smola (R-Warren, Ranking Member, Committee on Ways & Means)** joined with his House colleagues to support a comprehensive bond bill that invests \$1.7 billion for information technology, public safety, food security, and data and cyber-security improvements throughout state and local government.

House Bill 4733, *An Act financing the general governmental infrastructure of the Commonwealth*, was engrossed by the House of Representatives on a vote of 149-7 on May 20, with most members continuing to vote remotely to comply with social distancing requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic. Representative Smola noted this is a multi-year bond bill that is designed to replenish funding in many areas that were last funded in 2014.

In addition to providing \$165 million to improve the efficiency of state information technology resources and guard against cyber-attacks, the bond bill also includes \$23.4 million in grants for public and nonprofit entities to implement local information technology improvements and address other capital needs, along with \$10 million to help federally qualified health centers develop hardware and software solutions to protect medical and business data.

House Bill 4733 also establishes a \$36.5 million food security program within the Department of Agricultural Resources to support food banks, farm stands, elder services, and other food distribution channels disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the bond bill provides \$5 million to the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to develop a system to make it easier for applicants and recipients of MassHealth and the Medicare Savings Program to access benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) if they are eligible.

Representative Smola said the bond bill funds a series of grant initiatives to assist cities and towns with their IT and capital needs, including a \$40 million program to help public school districts establish, enhance and expand remote learning opportunities for students, and a \$20.5 million program to help municipalities fund the construction of fiber optic broadband infrastructure and related projects, with priority given to areas that are currently unserved. At least \$500,000 of this funding will be dedicated to regional planning agencies working with multiple communities on regional broadband infrastructure planning.

Additional municipal grant programs funded through the bond bill include:

- \$6.5 million for cities, towns, school districts and nonprofit entities for public school information technology improvements and other capital needs;
- \$5 million for the Community Compact Information Technology Grant Program;
- \$101 million for general improvements and capital upgrades to municipal facilities;
- \$10 million for cities and towns to make modifications to governmental infrastructure to improve accessibility;
- \$115 million to support approved municipal library projects; and
- \$25 million for fire departments to purchase firefighter safety gear and equipment.

Representative Smola noted that the bond bill allocates \$30 million for safety and security improvements at the state's public colleges, \$10 million of which is dedicated to Massachusetts' community colleges. This funding can be used for a wide range of safety needs, including campus police training, as well as the purchase of emergency communication systems, cameras, emergency call boxes and active shooter detection systems.

Other public safety initiatives funded in the bond bill include:

- \$5 million for grants to public and nonprofit entities for investments in public safety information technology, equipment and other capital needs;
- \$10 million for improvements to facilities operated by the Department of Fire Services, including the establishment of a Southeastern Massachusetts firefighter training facility;
- \$92.5 million for the replacement of State Police cruisers and equipment; and
- \$30 million for medical, security, safety and communications equipment, as well as vehicles, for the Department of Correction and other agencies within the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security.

House Bill 4733 now moves to the Senate for its consideration. For additional information please contact Representative Smola at [Todd.Smola@mahouse.gov](mailto:Todd.Smola@mahouse.gov) or (617)722-2100.

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