

Newsletter

Dear Friends,

I would like to open this month's newsletter by acknowledging the tragic events that took place on Marathon Monday. These senseless acts of violence have no place in our city, and I would like to extend a wholehearted thank-you to the men and women of law enforcement who worked around the clock to keep us safe until the suspects were apprehended, as well as the doctors and nurses at our city's hospitals that helped the wounded. My heart goes out to all the victims and their families. The people of Boston are strong and resilient, and I know that we can work together to heal the city that we love.

This past week, the House of Representatives passed a budget for Fiscal Year 2014. I am proud to have supported programs within our budget that that will help keep our young people and families safe and healthy. For more information about the budget, or any legislation I have filed, please look in the Budget or Legislative Update sections of the newsletter.

On March 30, I was happy to collaborate with the Boston Housing Authority and Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation in hosting the first annual Tenant Task Force elections at Bromley Heath. This was a great opportunity friends and neighbors to come together and participate in the democratic process, as well as enjoy some good food and live music. So much is possible when people come together to create positive change, and I am proud to see so many people working to make Bromley Heath a better place.

I was very excited to participate in a question and answer session with Brookline's Greater Point Neighborhood Association last month. Members of the Association gathered at the beautiful Brookline Music School to discuss how we can work together to make improvements for transportation, education, and health within Brookline and throughout the Commonwealth. The members had some great questions for me, as well as suggestions as to what changes they would like to see for their neighborhood. I hope to continue working with the Greater Point Neighborhood Association in the future, and I would like to give a special thank-you to Puja Mehta for organizing the event and inviting me to meet with them!

During the months of April and May, my office will be collaborating with area institutions for a book drive to benefit ABCD Parker Hill/Fenway's Head Start Program, The Mission Hill K-8 School, as well as the Curley School. Children's books can be donated at New England Baptist Hospital, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Wentworth Institute of Technology, Northeastern University, and Cityview Apartments. I would like to extend a sincere thank-you to all our partners for helping provide resources to encourage young kids to read!

In addition, my office will also be sponsoring a clothing drive for special needs students at the Cotting School in Lexington, MA. We will be collecting casual children's clothes in all sizes between now and the end of May. If you would like to donate, please feel free to stop by my office, Room 130 at the State House. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions at (617) 722-2130.

Public Health Committee Budget Update

During the budget process, I worked to secure \$1.5 million for Youth Violence Prevention Grants. These grants support proven programs that empower communities to reach out to youth, and help them turn away from crime and violence. Now more than ever, as acts of violence only continue to increase in our neighborhoods and state, these grants provide essential support to youth and keep them on track for success.

I was happy to advocate for those residents within the Commonwealth suffering from HIV/AIDS, worked to secure funding to help others from contracting the disease. Funding for HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and services line item was increased by \$500,000 to \$32.1 million dollars during the budget process. These funds will be used for direct care services for persons living with HIV/AIDS, as well as screenings to help catch the disease early.

In addition to working to secure funding for HIV/AIDS services, I fought to increase funding for Early Intervention services aimed at aiding children with diagnosed disabilities and those with developmental delays, including delays with speech and learning to walk. These funds will go towards programs to help these children acquire skills to grow into happy and healthy members of the community.

The House Budget also includes \$3.27 million for health promotion and disease prevention. These funds are essential to making chronic diseases more manageable and to reduce health disparities across the Commonwealth. Promotion and prevention are the heart and soul of public health, and ensure not only that our population is healthy but also prevent and control the most common preventable health conditions that are the largest drivers of health care costs.

The role of school nurses in preserving health for young people within public schools is essential. During the budget process, I worked to add \$200,000 to reach a total funding of \$11.6 million for School Based Health Programs, including training for medicine administration, complex feeding, and antiepileptic treatments. This funding helps to ensure that school nurses are at the ready to detect mental health disorders, a critical service that allows families to best manage a child's care and better ensure a successful childhood and adulthood.

This budget funds domestic violence and sexual assault prevention efforts at \$5.72 million, ensuring essential funds are there to prevent partner-on-partner violence and reduce the occurrence of sexual assault. These funds are important for educating our residents, as well as giving victims a safe place to turn.

The House also commits to substance abuse treatment and services, allocating \$84.6 million for substance abuse services provided by the Department of Public health. These services help residents managed behavioral health needs and provide critical services that encourage better overall health. Additionally, funding was provided to support the Self-Esteem Boston program which has served residents in our district for years. Additionally, the House strongly supported substance abuse step-down treatment; restores funding for a jail diversion program for nonviolent offenders who are addicted to opiates; and restores funds to the substance abuse family intervention care pilot that provides valuable services to family and children struggling with addiction.

Lastly, in response to increased funding provided by the House Ways and Means committee, I was proud to put forth a consolidated amendment that includes provisions that improve transparency at the Board of Pharmacy. Given the recent tragedies involving compounding pharmacies in Massachusetts, I believe it is very important to increase transparency and prevent such situations from ever occurring again.

I am very pleased with the Public Health gains made within the FY14 budget. Please do not hesitate to contact my office with any questions at (617) 722-2130.

Public Health Committee Legislative Update

It has been a busy couple of months for the Committee on Public Health. We have held two hearings so far this session, including one on pharmaceutical compounding in light of the recent fungal meningitis outbreak. The Committee is currently working on a comprehensive bill to that further addresses this issue and continues to protect the public health and safety of our state's citizens.

The Committee also continues to monitor implementation of the medical marijuana law passed by voters last November. The Department of Public Health (DPH) issued draft regulations on the law on March 29. DPH will be accepting public comment through April 20 and I encourage all who would like to make comment to contact DPH.

The health care payment reform law passed last summer is in the process of implementation, and the Committee continues to monitor its progress as well. The Health Policy Commission, established by the law, has been holding meetings to update on their progress, including the status of the Office of Patient Protection, their implementation of a provision prohibiting

mandatory nurse overtime, and listening sessions with the Division of Insurance on the registration of provider organizations as the law moves forward. The Commission also appointed a 32 member Advisory Council of providers, insurers, consumers, and other stakeholders from the business and health care industry.

We will continue to hold hearings on the more than 350 bills that have been referred to the Committee. Please do not hesitate to contact my office as the session moves forward.

District Budget Update

During the FY14 budget debates, I was proud to advocate for increased funding for programs for youth employment and safety. My fellow Representatives and I were able to secure \$5 million in funding for The YouthWorks Teen Job Program, which helps fund the salaries of teens in high-risk neighborhoods for summer jobs in the government and non-profit sectors. I believe it is extremely important for young people to have access to jobs, not only so they can support themselves, but also to provide direction as to what they may want to pursue as a career later in life. I believe this program will open many doors for young people, and I am proud to have sponsored it within the budget.

In addition, I helped fight for increased funding of the Shannon Anti-Violence Grant program, which helps to fund police gang suppression programs in 27 cities and towns for at-risk youth. This program received \$4.5 million in funding through the budget debate process. We lose too many young people to gang violence in our neighborhoods, and I believe the Shannon program will help the young people in my district stay safer.

I was also extremely proud to have prevented attempts to limit the eligibility process for such public benefits as housing, Emergency Assistance, and MassHealth, in addition to protecting the eligibility of Sanctuary cities and towns to receive federal funding.

District Legislative Update

Having voted on passing the FY14 budget, the House of Representatives can now shift its attention to legislation. I am proud to have filed pieces of legislation to improve the educational opportunities for young people in my district and throughout the Commonwealth.

I am proud to have filed English Language Learners legislation which would provide greater flexibility and accountability throughout our educational system for young students in our public schools who are trying to learn English. Many young people attending public schools in Massachusetts have a native language other than English, and this bill would increase accountability for school districts in providing exceptional opportunities for these students. This piece of legislation came before the Committee on Education, and I was happy to testify

before the committee on its tremendous benefits for English Language Learners throughout our communities.

In addition, I sponsored legislation that allows for a providers' organization of directors and educators at early education centers throughout Massachusetts. This bill covers approximately 5,000 early educators working in 500 of the most resource-needy centers in the Commonwealth, and would allow these crucial educators the ability to work with the Commonwealth to improve the services they provide. The educators at these early education centers provide children with incredibly important services during the earliest stages of their development, and I am happy to sponsor legislation that would help them provide exceptional educational opportunities. This piece of legislation was referred to the Committee on Public Service, and I look forward to tracking its progress in the coming weeks.

Restaurant of the Month

Same Old Place

The Same Old Place is located on Centre Street in Jamaica Plain. It is known for its amazing tasting New York style pizza and its deliciously addicting subs. Open all week to satisfy your food cravings with eat in, pick-up and speedy delivery services, and all day serving breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Same Old Place is a Jamaica Plain must eat pizzeria but if you cannot finish a whole pie or not in the mood you can buy them by the slice or order another one of their tasty meals off a large variety menu. Same Old Place has been a staple in the Jamaica Plain community for over 20 years and is still going strong. So if you haven't yet please stop by and have a slice!