

Did you know that May is Asthma Awareness Month? Asthma education and care is an issue that my office has been working on for years. This disease disproportionately affects low income and minority groups in Massachusetts and is a growing concern in our communities. Within this newsletter you'll find some links to helpful resources on asthma management and on how you can help to raise awareness about this widespread, yet manageable disease.

This month the House will be continuing budget debates that began at the end of April after House Ways and Means released its budget (HWM) late last month. With a \$1.3 billion deficit, the House Ways and Means budget is a conservative and responsible budget proposal. Throughout the budget debates, I will continue to advocate for our community's priorities in a responsible manner within these difficult fiscal times. Please see the budget section of this newsletter for updates on this session's budget process. We'll keep you posted.

Please read through this newsletter for state house information and what's going on in your community. Thank you again for your interest in my office's work and for your continued support.

Yours in Service,

This past month the House passed the state budget during a week-long debate. I am pleased to say that several items I sponsored for the Fiscal Year 2009 Budget were approved by the House of Representatives, including a number of key workforce development and youth violence prevention items.

Following through on my commitment to advocate for the priorities of my district and constituents within the constraints of a difficult fiscal climate, I successfully lobbied for several new and current initiatives in the state's budget appropriations.

In light of the Commonwealth's budget deficit I felt it was most important to focus on programs that will prove more cost effective in the long run and where we get a return on our investment. That is why I have focused on priorities such as preventative care, education, workforce development, the environment and programs for our youth knowing that these are strategic investments that will benefit my constituents in the immediacy and future.

I once again fought for youth violence prevention programs and year-round employment opportunities for youth, which includes summer jobs. With the recent tragedy in Jamaica Plain we have seen first-hand how crucial these programs are for our community and the need to invest in our youth. Among the budget amendments I supported and were written into the final language of the bill include a \$2 million increase in funding for the Senator Charles Shannon Jr. Safety Initiative for preventing youth and gang violence. In addition to the Shannon grant, the Youth Violence Prevention grants that benefit community youth-serving agencies such as Hyde Square Task Force and Sociedad Latina received a \$1 million increase, along with a \$1.7 million increase for youth employment, specifically summer jobs for at-risk youth.

I also supported a number of education amendments incorporated into the final House Ways and Means budget, knowing that adult basic education, elementary and secondary education and after-school programs have been priorities for my constituents. The adult basic education line item, including English as a Second Language classes, received a \$1 million increase, as did the METCO program. I would have liked to see more for ABE but recognize that the budget is tight this year.

I was again able to secure a \$200,000 earmark in the workforce development line item for the Jamaica Plain/Mission Hill Employment Collaborative. The earmark benefits organizations throughout the district seeking to prepare local residents to succeed in an increasingly competitive job market, including ABCD Parker Hill/Fenway Neighborhood Services Center, Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation, MissionSAFE, MissionWorks, Sociedad Latina and X-Cel Adult Education. I believe we need programs like the Employment Collaborative that will provide our residents the necessary skills to fill the over 90,000 job vacancies across the commonwealth.

My office also fought for increased funding for the Department of Conservation and Recreation parks and urban parks line items, including stormwater management recognizing that a lack of attention to stormwater management leads to increased pollution in our rivers and flooding on the parkways. Keeping in line with the work my office has done around the Jamaicaway and Arborway planning initiatives, the urban parks line item will include increased funding for DCR operated parkways.

Lastly, I once again secured funding for the school based oral health program, *ForsythKids*. The program provides preventive dentistry services to students of the Maurice J. Tobin School and the Farragut Elementary School. Dental disease continues to be linked to a variety of health issues and the average cost of direct care for children in the Forsyth program is \$100 per child per year, while the national average Medicaid oral health expenditure per child per year is \$250. This program makes sense in the long run as a cost effective tool for preventing higher oral health costs for these children in the future, recognizing that many of them do not regularly see a dentist and some have never been to one at all.

The Senate will soon take up its own budget recommendations as well, at which time I will work both to ensure that my budget initiatives are included in the legislature's final recommendations and seek to increase funding for key items through the Senate and Conference Committee discussions.