ML STRATEGIES

Governor Healey State of the Commonwealth Address

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On Tuesday, January 16, 2025, Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey delivered her second State of the Commonwealth Address. Below is a summary of some of the policy areas that she discussed during her nearly hour-long address to a Joint Session of the Massachusetts House of Representatives and Senate.

Childcare:

- Massachusetts has delivered the first tax cut in 1,000 years: seniors get an extra $1,000 back, and families get an extra $400 back per child.
- Massachusetts has the most generous childcare tax credit in the country.
- The tax credit goes along with free lunch and breakfast at school and no-cost community college.
- Massachusetts is the only state to fully replace federal support for childcare that went away by implementing a $1.5 billion investment.
- Childcare is growing in Massachusetts.
    - 36,000 more children are getting care, which means their parents are able to go to work and support their families.

Home Ownership/Housing:

- Massachusetts passed the Affordable Homes Act. The state has added 4,000 homes and helped 2,400 first-time homeowners last year alone.
- Housing production in state programs increased by 50%.
- The $5 billion act was signed for homeowners. Governor Healey's goal for 2025 is to implement this act.
    - More than 116 towns have said yes to more homes near transit through the MBTA Communities Act.
    - There are thousands of new homes in the pipeline.
- Many young people in the state are renters.
    - Most people pay $10,000, including many fees, before even moving into a rental.
    - Governor Healey is calling to abolish tenant brokers' fees in Massachusetts.

Public Transportation:

- The state hired an experienced general manager for the MBTA, Phillip Eng.
- Phil set a goal of fixing the T's tracks by the end of 2024. For the first time in over 20 years, the T is running at full speed with no more slow zones.
- The regional bus systems from the Berkshires to Cape Ann are now fare-free.
- For the first time in 70 years, starting in the spring, South Coast Rail Commuter service will run to Taunton, Fall River, and New Bedford.
- Goals for 2025:

- To drivers, riders, and others: “The money you invest will get you results.”
- Governor Healey plans to invest $8 billion over the next 10 years to make transportation safer and more reliable across the entire state.
  - We will see bridges fully open again — both major and smaller bridges.
  - We will see more funding in towns’ local budgets to fix roads and sidewalks.
  - Governor Healey will close the budget gap for the MBTA.

Infrastructure:

- Massachusetts brought home $9 billion in federal funding for internet, roads, bridges, etc., in the last two years.
- Massachusetts received the biggest bridge grant ever given to a state for the Cape Cod bridges.

Emergency Shelters:

- The Healey administration promises to get families out of hotels for good in 2025.
- Massachusetts taxpayers cannot and should not foot the cost of the massive influx into the emergency shelter system due to a failure of federal border control. The federal government needs to fix this at the source by passing a border security bill.
- Governor Healey argues that people who commit violent acts should be deported. Immigrant families who work in the state should be allowed a path forward. Congress should act to address this border control issue without delay.

Veterans:

- Massachusetts recently passed the HERO Act (An Act Honoring, Empowering, and Recognizing our Servicemembers and Veterans).
- The state’s goal is to end veteran homelessness once and for all.
- Massachusetts was awarded a new fleet of F-35 fire jets for one of its US Air Force bases.

Historical Trends:

- Massachusetts pardoned hundreds of thousands of people for misdemeanor marijuana convictions.
- Each year that Governor Healey has been in office, fewer residents have left. Last year, the state experienced a 60-year-high population increase.
- Massachusetts is ranked No. 1 in education, innovation, and health care.
- Massachusetts is voted the best state for women to have a baby and to raise a family.
- Massachusetts is voted the most environmentally friendly state.
- The rainy-day fund is at record levels.
- Governor Healey says, “The state of our Commonwealth is strong.”
- Governor Healey’s goal this year is to build on the historic trends that Massachusetts was able to set this year.
- Governor Healey’s budget next year will prioritize efficiency, action, and impact.

High School/Education/Testing:

- Even if the MCAS has been permanently abolished, we still need a high statewide standard to ensure we have a baseline indicating what a high school diploma signifies.
- Governor Healey is directing a statewide graduation requirement council, which will include teachers, colleges, and other educators working together to create education standards.
- The governor will create early college and job training programs that give students a leg up on their next steps.
- Governor Healey will grow systems of support for high school students, including those that encourage and empower those who struggle with mental health challenges.

- The governor plans to make classes in American Sign Language eligible for course credit.

Health Care:

- Massachusetts ranks first in the nation in health care coverage.
- As the health care system is currently structured, people don't know if they can afford their medication.
    - Last week Governor Healey signed a law mandating that residents will not pay more than $25 a month for insulin, an inhaler, and several other medications.
- She mentioned that her team was able to successfully get Steward Health Care out of Massachusetts – in the process saving six hospitals and protecting 13,000 jobs.
    - She highlighted the efforts of unions and management working together, how not-for-profit systems stepped in to address gaps, and the work that Secretary of Health and Human Services Kate Walsh did.
- Governor Healey's goal is to shift health care resources to the front lines, including primary care.
- Massachusetts will maintain its unshakable commitment to reproductive health care.

Business/AI:

- Governor Healey wants to make it cheaper and faster to do business in Massachusetts. To further that goal, she is directing the economic team to review all business and licensing regulations in the first three months of this year, with the goal of cutting red tape.
- Governor Healey has funded a $100 million AI Hub to back the scientists and startups whose breakthroughs will define our future.

Clean Energy:

- The climate law just passed in Massachusetts speeds up the permitting process, so individuals can build infrastructure more quickly and get the energy to homes and businesses.

Authors



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Steve Baddour is a seasoned strategist and former Massachusetts State Senator and Assistant Attorney General with over three decades of experience in law, government, and public policy. His innovative approach to lobbying helps clients turn obstacles into opportunities by crafting tailored solutions that get results where others stall.



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Taylor Shepherd is a seasoned public policy professional with a proven track record of success in legislative and regulatory lobbying, strategy, and relationship building. With roots in the Massachusetts State House, she has developed a meticulous and strategic approach to navigating the complexities of the policymaking process.

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