**Most Important Things about the Senate Ways and Means Budget**

* It presents a balanced budget that uses $700M less in tax related revenue than the Governor’s budget and fewer one time resources than the Governor or House budgets
The SWM budget is consistent with the tax revenue framework agreed to with the House prior to the transportation finance bill. In addition, the SWM budget uses only $627M in one time resources:
	+ Like the House, our budget uses only $350M from the Stabilization Fund
* It fully funds Special Education Circuit Breaker and provides increases for other education local aid items
The SWM budget provides $252.8M to reimburse school districts for the cost of high need special education students. We project that this $22.4M increase over FY 2013 will fully fund the state obligation. In addition, this budget helps cities, towns and school districts by:
	+ Providing $130.1M in new Chapter 70, including $16.9M in target aid to communities that receive less in Chapter 70 aid than they should;
	+ Increasing charter school reimbursements by $5.9M over the FY 2013 level;
	+ Funding regional school transportation at $49.5M, a $5M increase over the FY 2013 spending level.
* It eliminates the waitlist for elder homecare services
Funding for elder affairs in the SWM budget will eliminate the existing elder home care waitlist. This $6.5M increase in funding will allow close to 1,500 seniors to receive services that can keep them living independently in their homes. The SWM budget also provides an additional $1.3M to Councils on Aging that will increase the reimbursement rate to $8 per elder.
* It continues our commitment to sustainable housing
The SWM budget includes $19.6M in increased funding for sustainable housing programs. Most notably, our budget provides $57.5M in rental assistance for low income families, which will provide new subsidized housing vouchers to more than 1,000 Massachusetts families. Our budget also provides substantial funding increases for RAFT, providing residential assistance for families at risk of homelessness, Housing Consumer Education Centers and the Tenancy Preservation Program. Each of these programs play a vital role in helping families find and maintain sustainable housing and avoid the shelter system.
* It increases access for subsidized childcare
The SWM budget includes a new $15M line item to provide subsidized childcare to families on the waitlist. While not eliminating the existing waitlist, providing 2,000 children with subsidized childcare will mark the first time the state has expanded access since FY 2009.
* It supports the spectrum of state mental health services
The SWM budget funds up to 671 inpatient mental health beds, including 45 beds at Taunton State Hospital, and provides sizable increases for community, emergency and adolescent mental health services. These funding increases will support existing capacity in the community and expand emergency services and services for children.
* It increases state support for economic development and employment programs
The SWM budget includes $72.4M in increased funding for economic development and workforce programs. This increase is primarily due to the use of expected gaming license revenues which will support $19.75M for local capital projects and $15M for the Advanced Manufacturing Futures program. In addition, our budget provides:
	+ $8M for Youth-at-Risk Summer Jobs
	+ $3M to recapitalize the Innovation Institute at the Mass. Tech. Collaborative
	+ $2M to expand a machinist training pilot program that was created in last year’s Senate budget
* It continues our commitment to making government work better
The SWM budget includes a number of initiatives that will enhance program integrity in FY 2014 and improve decision making going forward. Initiatives include:
	+ Investments to improve auditing and financial controls in MassHealth and in other departments. Between FY 2007 and FY 2012, MassHealth increased program integrity revenues by almost $200M. We believe that these returns will increase as long as we continue these investments
	+ New evaluation pilot programs for public health, early education and the court system. This budget includes 3 new initiatives that will allow us to know more about what works and what doesn’t in three areas of government with the potential to save the state millions of dollars in future health care, education and criminal justice costs.
* It does not make these new investments at the expense of core government services
The SWM budget does not come to balance by relying on deep cuts to core services. Notably, the SWM budget:
	+ Funds MassHealth at a level sufficient to maintain existing services and implement Affordable Care Act
	+ Provides the Trial Court with the funds necessary to continue to rebuild from their cuts of the last 5 years and more appropriately staff the court system
	+ Ensures that the state police can maintain current operations and recruit and train 150 new officers
	+ Recognizes the need to fund our IT infrastructure, which is vital in making government more efficient and more secure