



State Universities
of Massachusetts

CoP Remarks on Behalf of the State University System to the Board of Higher Education

February 10, 2026

Introduction

Good morning, Chairman Gabrieli, Secretary Tutwiler, Commissioner Ortega, and members of the Board of Higher Education. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today about the important work the Massachusetts State Universities are doing to fulfill our mission of offering high-quality, affordable, and life-changing postsecondary education.

Governor's FY27 Budget Proposal

I would like to begin my remarks with some comments on the Governor's FY27 state budget recommendations to the legislature that she filed last month.

Thank you, Secretary Tutwiler, Commissioner Ortega, and your amazing team at the DHE for your advocacy with the Governor and the Executive Office for Administration and Finance on behalf of the state universities during the development of the FY27 spending recommendations. The Council of Presidents fully support and endorse your proposed budget recommendations.

Throughout the fall, my colleagues and I stressed the importance of fully annualizing the FY26 collective bargaining costs and recognizing the FY27 CBA obligations within our campus appropriation line items. Thanks to your leadership and advocacy, the Governor's spending plan reflects these priorities by incorporating these obligated costs into the base appropriations for our campuses.

The annualization of collective-bargaining obligations continues to be the state universities' top budget priority. With more than 92 percent of our workforce represented by unions, the single largest cost driver for our institutions is an unfunded or underfunded collective bargaining agreement.

During the economic downturn in 2009, the Administration funded and annualized only the first year of our three-year collective-bargaining agreement. This decision had long-lasting effects on campus finances for nearly a decade.

Recovery from that structural shortfall was ultimately made possible through a series of policy decisions during the Baker Administration. Over Governor Baker's two terms, the Commonwealth committed to fully funding and annualizing all three years of campus collective-bargaining agreements, while establishing financial parameters that moderated negotiated salary increases. Since contractual salary obligations are covered by either the state or our student through fees, full funding of these contracts goes a long way to ensuring that our campuses remain affordable.

We are grateful that Governor Healey has not only continued this commitment to fully funding and annualizing campus collective-bargaining agreements, but also has expanded it through historic investments in public higher education. We also appreciate the additional \$18.3 million in financial aid

funding included in the Governor's FY26 supplemental budget filed alongside H2. While our students' needs always outpace the resources that are available, continued investment in financial aid is essential to preserving access and affordability for our students with the greatest financial need.

The state universities will advocate for the legislature to support this funding as well as the other public higher education priorities included in the H.2. These investments include:

- Expanding the MassGrant Plus program;
- Level funding for our SUCCESS program so our campuses can continue our work on student retention rates;
- Restoration of the state university funding formula line item;
- Deferred maintenance funding as we await the passage of the BRIGHT Act;
- Continued funding for our internship program;
- Investment in the public higher education endowment program;
- Support of early college programs.

The Governor's budget relies on \$2.7 billion in Fair Share funding with 65% being directed to education initiatives. Of the 65% only \$236 million, which is less than 9%, is being directed to public higher education. We view this amount as a starting point, and we will advocate with the legislature to increase public higher education's share of the surtax revenue in their budget recommendations.

Conclusion

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to share this update from our state universities. On behalf of my colleagues, we are grateful to the Administration and the Legislature for the historic and ongoing support in making higher education more affordable and accessible for all. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.