

THE AUDITOR'S REPORT



News & Updates

from the Office of the State Auditor Suzanne M. Bump

Making government work better



Suzanne M. Bump
State Auditor

Dear Friend,

Budgets are a statement of values.

Communities across the state are feeling the budgetary squeeze when it comes to providing a high-quality public education for their students. This pain is particularly acute in areas that are a part of regional school districts, which thanks to dwindling student populations, outdated governance structures, and broken financial promises are facing a looming crisis.

I recently had the opportunity to speak with members of the Massachusetts Association of School Business Officers. These are the men and women who are responsible for not only balancing the books to ensure that students receive a quality education, but also for keeping the lights on and the school buses running. While there, I heard stories of communities at the breaking point who are facing the unenviable prospect of making drastic cuts if change is not made.

As the Legislature looks toward the completion of its budget drafting process, they have an opportunity to throw a critical lifeline to these communities. A [report released by my office last year laid out steps that can be taken to address some of these funding issues](#). The most critical of these is fulfilling its commitment to reimburse regional school and homeless student transportation costs.

Providing this funding will not address all of the challenges facing these communities—long-term changes are still desperately needed—but it will be a significant step.

Thank you,

Suzanne M. Bump
Auditor of the Commonwealth



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[Auditor Bump Recommends Improved Data Collection for Worcester County District Attorney's Young Adult Diversion Program to Assess Program Effectiveness](#)

[Annual Report Shows Auditor's Office Identified More Than \\$211 Million in Inappropriate MassHealth Payments](#)

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Auditor Bump talked about the many ways her office helps make state government work better — from audits that improve agency performance to efforts ensure integrity and accessibility in the Commonwealth's public benefit programs during a meeting with members of the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce Community Leader Program last month.

OSA Focus: Integrity & Accessibility in Public Benefit Programs

Public benefit programs like MassHealth and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) play a critical role in the health and well-being of our state. The Office of State Auditor Suzanne M. Bump (OSA) works to make public benefit programs in Massachusetts work better by ensuring they are accessible and operated with integrity.

Fraud represents a small amount of total spending on public benefits, but it has a disproportionate impact on reducing public trust in these programs. This is why Auditor Bump and her staff work to improve the integrity of these programs by identifying fraud and rooting out the bad actors that are inappropriately receiving benefits.

This month, [the OSA released its annual report on its efforts to identify fraud in these programs](#), which found that for the seventh year in a row, it identified a record amount of fraud: \$16.9 million. The increased findings is not an indication of more fraud, but rather a reflection of the growing effectiveness of Bump's agency and expanded use of data analytics to identify fraudulent activities.

To ensure their accessibility, the OSA has also begun a series of audits to identify barriers that individuals face when seeking assistance from public benefit programs. As part of this effort, Bump's office has provided recommendations to reduce these barriers at the [Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Fund](#) and the [Department of Veterans' Services](#).

Public benefit programs help make the Commonwealth stronger and support some of our state's most vulnerable residents; 91 percent of individuals receiving SNAP and 58 percent of MassHealth members are children, adults with disabilities, and seniors. This is why the OSA works to protect their integrity and accessibility.



Recently, Auditor Bump joined hosts Paul Letendre and Rebecca Hyman at Taunton Community Access Media to discuss the work of the Auditor's Office to bring greater accountability to state government. Using audits of the [Sex Offender Registry Board](#), the [Department of Veterans Services](#), and the [Department of Children and Families](#), Auditor Bump highlighted ways state government can break down silos and share information to be more effective.

OSA's Work Makes Headlines

[State auditor talks about solutions to regional schools' woes at Marlboro conference](#)

One of the biggest challenges facing regional school districts is the state's failure to fully reimburse them for their transportation costs. Auditor Bump talked about potential solutions to this issue with school officials at the Massachusetts Association of School Business Administrators annual meeting last month, the *Worcester Telegram & Gazette* reports.

[Owner of transportation company Rite Way indicted for money laundering in MassHealth fraud scheme](#)

The *Springfield Republican* reports on new charges in the case against the owner of a former MassHealth vendor. A [2015 audit](#) found Rite Way LLC billed MassHealth for \$16 million in potentially fraudulent claims for wheelchair van transportation. The findings were referred to the Office of the Attorney General for investigation.

[Reading receives check for early voting costs](#)

As a result of the OSA's cost certification and funding from the legislature, communities across Massachusetts are getting reimbursements to cover the costs of early voting during the 2016 election, the *Reading Patch* reports.

[Audit of Union Point oversight board shows improvement](#)

The Southfield Redevelopment Authority has made significant improvements to address deficiencies found in a 2013 audit, but concerns about potential liabilities and cash flow issues remain, the *Patriot Ledger* writes.

Accountability in Action: A More Just System

Lawmakers on Beacon Hill recently passed a criminal justice reform bill. While crafting this legislation led to intense debates, an area of agreement was that one of the best ways to improve our criminal justice system is by providing people the opportunity to never enter it.

To this goal, Auditor Bump's office recently began a series of audits looking at the Young Adult Diversion Programs that are administered by the Commonwealth's district attorneys. These programs provide young people who are charged with their first criminal offense for certain nonviolent crimes—such as possession of alcohol or disturbing the peace—with the opportunity to make amends for this mistake while keeping their record clean and staying out of jail.



The Auditor's Office has recently begun a series of audits looking at the Young Adult Diversion Programs that are administered by the Commonwealth's district attorneys.

[The first audit in this series looked at the program administered by the Worcester DA's office.](#) While Bump's office found that it did not require that all participants complete and/or document the education requirements of the program, the DA's office was quick to implement the audit recommendations to improve the program.

Bump also noted that by better collecting data and monitoring whether participants go on to commit crimes later, the DA's office can not only measure how well the program is meeting its intended goals, but can also take steps to make it more effective at keeping kids out of the criminal justice system.

There is no silver bullet to address the challenges in our criminal justice system; doing so will take consistent efforts from lawmakers, law enforcement, and citizens. Our hope is that OSA's audits will help policymakers with these efforts.



Vote for the OSA!

Auditor Bump has been nominated for StateScoop's Golden Gov award for spearheading the use of technology to innovate the way the OSA assess state government performance and recommends improvements to make it work better for residents of the Commonwealth. [Cast your vote today!](#)



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