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Representative Smola supports economic development bill targeting job creation and workforce development

BOSTON – Representative Todd M. Smola (R-Warren, Ranking Member, Committee on Ways & Means), has endorsed a comprehensive economic development bill aimed at creating and retaining jobs in the Commonwealth and supporting critical infrastructure investments.

House Bill 4569, *An Act relative to job creation and workforce development*, passed the House of Representatives on a vote of 156-0 on July 31. The bill – which authorizes \$1.02 billion in borrowing over the next 5 years – is now on Governor Charlie Baker’s desk awaiting his signature.

“The economic development bill provides funding for a variety of programs covering everything from workforce training and infrastructure improvements to housing development and brownfields remediation,” said Representative Smola. “These targeted investments will go a long way towards creating new jobs and improving the state’s economy.”

The bond bill includes \$500 million for the recapitalization of the MassWorks infrastructure program, which serves as a “one stop shopping” program for cities and towns seeking public infrastructure funding to support economic development and job creation. Funding from this program can be used to pay for a variety of projects, including city and town center revitalization, mill redevelopment, multi-family or small lot single-family residential development, and transportation improvements that enhance roadway safety in small, rural communities.

To encourage families to save money for higher education costs, the bill provides a tax incentive program allowing for deductions on contributions to a prepaid tuition or college savings program, also known as 529 plans. Single filers, married taxpayers who file separate returns, and those filing as heads of household will be able to claim a deduction of up to \$1,000, while married taxpayers filing jointly will be able to claim a deduction of up to \$2,000.

In addition, the bill includes language allowing fantasy sports contests in Massachusetts between August 1, 2016 and July 31, 2018 in accordance with the regulations set forth by Attorney General Maura Healey. It also establishes a commission to study the regulation of fantasy contests, including the implications for existing gaming in the Commonwealth, and sets a deadline of July 31, 2017 for the commission to submit its final report and recommendations to the Legislature.

Other funding initiatives contained in the bill include:

- \$45.9 million in competitive grants to establish, upgrade and expand career technical education and training programs aligned with regional economic and workforce development initiatives;
- \$30 million to support training and education programs to address workforce shortages in the manufacturing, technology and hospitality industries;
- \$1 million for the Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation to provide matching grants to community development financial institutions and community development corporations to leverage federal and private investments for small business loans;
- \$71 million in matching grants for Massachusetts colleges and universities to participate in the National Network for Manufacturing Innovation federal initiative;
- \$15 million for scientific and technology research and development matching grants for the state's universities and research institutions;
- \$23.6 million for Public Infrastructure grants to municipalities for design, construction, land acquisition, repair and other improvements to publicly-owned infrastructure;
- \$15.7 million for grants and loans to municipalities, private property owners and businesses to support community development and innovation through the Innovation Infrastructure Fund;
- \$45 million to facilitate the clean-up and reuse of sites contaminated by hazardous waste and pollutants;

- \$15 million for the MassDevelopment Site Readiness Fund to facilitate pre-development permitting and marketing initiatives;
- \$45 million to revitalize Gateway Cities under MassDevelopment's Transformative Development Initiative;
- \$15 million to provide incentive payments to communities that create dense residential or mixed-use smart growth zoning districts;
- \$25 million for the Workforce Housing Production Trust Fund;
- \$1 million for the Urban Revitalization and Development Grant Program;
- \$2.4 million to encourage dual enrollment partnerships between school districts and public higher education institutions to allow high school students to earn free college credits toward an associate degree;
- \$5 million for the improvement and rehabilitation of navigable coastal and inland waterways projects (including, but not limited to, dredging); and
- \$25 million for the State Police and Boston Regional Intelligence Center/Boston Police Department to establish and improve programs for the prevention of economic cybercrime, terrorist activities, organized crime, including gangs, and to enhance emergency response and transportation infrastructure alerts.

For additional information please contact Representative Smola at Todd.Smola@mahouse.gov or (617)722-2100.

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