



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Legislature, Governor United in Support of \$19 Million Early College Budget**

***State legislators continue to lead on Early College in partnership with the Governor's administration, authorizing a near-doubling in state funding for the coming school year.***

Today, the Governor approved the FY23 fiscal budget, concluding months of work across both branches of the Legislature and the Administration. The approved budget provides \$19 million in Early College funding for FY23, an \$8 million increase from FY22. There was widespread alignment around Early College throughout this process, signaling meaningful collaboration for many. In particular, the increased funding was made possible through the continued leadership of legislators in both the House and the Senate, who together have helped drive the growth of the Massachusetts Early College Initiative over four years. This investment will enable practitioners to sustain and deepen Early College programs.

FY22 funding growth provided critical resources at the state and local levels to increase access to and quality of designated Early College programs. The FY23 funding will build on last year's foundation and key accomplishments, further positioning leaders to increase the opportunity and impact of Early College across the Commonwealth. Early agreement in both the House and Senate budgets on this year's Early College funding recommendation built on the important collaborative work this past Fall and Winter involving the Executive Office of Education, the Departments of Elementary and Secondary and Higher Education, the Early College Joint Committee, and key partners to align on expected growth and critical strategic investments. Based on the the Administration's draft spending plan presented to the Early College Joint Committee in July, increased funding will enable:

- **Significant growth in enrollment:** Early College programs are projected to reach 7,500 students in SY22-23, earning more than 50,000 college credits. The key drivers of this growth included: increasing enrollment in existing programs, significantly expanding access in programs that were awarded Expansion Grants (made possible by the FY22 funding), and launching eight new programs that received designation in 2022. With the state's ninth designation cycle underway, momentum for Early College continues and is evidenced by 26 programs submitting letters of intent to apply this cycle. This growth is a reflection of increased funding and a stable policy environment for building and scaling Early College programs.
- **Deeper, more stable start-up grants:** the FY23 budget enables larger start-up grants for programs, and increased certainty that they will be multi-year, which is critical for programs' ability to plan and implement with quality. Schools will also have access to additional grant funding to support specific activities, such as scaling up their programs to reach many more students.
- **Strengthened program quality:** capacity will grow at the state level to administer and support the initiative, and will also provide increased resources directly to designated partnerships for coaching to support planning and implementation of high-quality, growing programs. Additionally, investments will be made in program evaluation and qualitative review.

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Jeff Riley has also committed \$6 million in Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) funding to deepen innovation and scale through continuing competitive grants focused on program scale and depth. This funding is already supporting more than 20 programs across the state who are working with partnering technical assistance providers to build “whole-school” programs, to dramatically expand enrollment in current programs, or to explore innovative models that broaden access.

These investments come at a time when Early College is showing promising outcomes through high quality program evaluation. Early College is rigorously evaluated and transparently reported on at regular intervals. Using a well-matched comparison methodology, a recent report to the Early College Joint Committee found that in its 5th year, Early College is effecting a 15 percentage-point increase in immediate college enrollment, and a 16 percentage-point increase in postsecondary persistence. Erika Giampietro, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Alliance for Early College, commented on the budget outcome, “we are incredibly grateful for the continued leadership of legislators in both the House and Senate who, along with the Governor, continue to commit to growing investments in this evidence-based program.”

A strength of Early College is high levels of local, community-driven demand. Widespread interest in and enthusiasm for Early College was evidenced when the Massachusetts Alliance for Early College submitted a letter of support to the legislature with more than 220 signatures, advocating for a \$19 million Early College budget for FY23. The shared ownership of Early College across the Governor’s administration, the House, and the Senate are a reflection of leadership’s commitment to investing in a data-driven, evidence-based initiative that is moving the needle for Massachusetts students and their families.

*The Massachusetts Alliance for Early College (MA4EC) is a coalition of more than 100 community-based organizations, businesses, philanthropists, school districts, and higher education institutions supportive of a substantial increase in the number of students enrolled in high-quality Early College programs in order to improve college degree attainment, particularly for low-income, Black, and Latino students. The Alliance supports the field through a blend of policy, community engagement, innovation, and technical assistance.*