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Governor



KARYN POLITO
Lt. Governor

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Governor Baker Signs Bill To Fund New Facility at Chelsea Soldiers' Home and High Speed Internet in Western Mass

\$244 million capital bond bill will support both Soldiers' Homes and the Massachusetts Broadband Institute

BOSTON – Today, Governor Charlie Baker signed [An Act providing for immediate capital improvement needs of the Commonwealth](#) that increases bond authorization by \$244 million to support initiatives across the Commonwealth including construction of a new long-term care facility at the Chelsea Soldiers' Home and expanded access to broadband in Western Massachusetts.

"This bill funds critical projects across the Commonwealth, including the Last Mile broadband project and money for the Chelsea Soldiers' Home renovation project," **said Governor Charlie Baker**. "We thank the Legislature for bringing us one step closer to updating the Chelsea Soldiers' Home for our veterans and their families and to providing high speed internet for the remaining unserved towns in Western Massachusetts."

"Increasing the authorization for broadband services will help continue the work the administration has done to increase access to high speed internet in all communities in the Commonwealth," **said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito**. "The administration encourages the Legislature to take action once the new session begins on the remaining bond requests before them, including funding for municipal grant programs for IT equipment, ADA adaptations, and other local priorities."

The bond legislation signed today includes \$199 million to replace the long-term care

facility at the Chelsea Soldiers' Home, which is expected to be partially reimbursed by the federal government pending final approval from the Department of Veterans Affairs. The bill also directs the administration to study the long-term needs of the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke.

"The Soldiers' Home in Chelsea provides comprehensive, quality health care and residential services with honor, dignity and respect to the Commonwealth's veterans," **said Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders**. "The upgrades to the Soldiers' Home ensure that the physical plant meets modern health care requirements commensurate with the needs of our veterans."

The legislation also includes \$45 million for broadband infrastructure, to provide new capital funding to hasten efforts to close the broadband gap for unserved or, Last Mile, communities.

In [May 2016, the Baker-Polito Administration launched a new Last Mile leadership team](#) and a new framework to accelerate implementation of broadband projects in unserved or underserved communities. This effort has supported multiple efforts to expand broadband coverage in Western and North Central Massachusetts. To date, 42 out of the 54 unserved or partially-served Last Mile towns have a working project that has been supported by the Commonwealth through either a direct grant for a municipal-led Last Mile project, or a solution from a private provider.

Today's new authorization will further drive these efforts, critical to economic development, education and quality of life in unserved communities.

"With this new funding, the administration is going the extra mile to ensure we continue to build the momentum we have in closing the broadband gap for communities in Western and Central Massachusetts," **said Housing and Economic Development Secretary Jay Ash**. "High-speed, broadband internet is a necessity in today's internet-connect world, and we will continue to work with municipalities to pursue collaborative solutions that best fit the unique needs of our unserved communities."

"We are pleased to see authorization for the replacement of the Quigley Hospital at Chelsea Soldiers' Home passed, which was proposed in our capital budget plan," **said Administration and Finance Secretary Michael J. Heffernan**. "By leveraging the use of significant federal resources to build the new facility, we optimize the value of the Commonwealth's capital investment in this project."

On May 31, Governor Baker filed [legislation](#) to address immediate capital needs statewide, including \$950 million for higher education projects, \$880 million for

construction, renovations, and accessibility improvements at state office buildings, \$700 million for health and human services facilities, \$550 million for public safety facilities and \$375 million for court facilities. While the legislation signed today includes authorization for the Chelsea Soldiers' Home, several items from this bill remain pending.

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