

Massachusetts Coalition for Special Education Funding

Massachusetts Coalition for Special Education Funding Members:

Children's League of Massachusetts

Federation for Children with Special Needs

Massachusetts Administrators for Special Education

Massachusetts Advocates for Children

Massachusetts Association of School Committees

Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents

Massachusetts Association of Special Education Parent Advisory Councils

Massachusetts Association of 766 Approved Private Schools

Massachusetts Organization of Education Collaboratives

Parent Professional Advocacy League

The Arc of Massachusetts

What is the Special Education Circuit Breaker?

The Special Education Circuit Breaker account was put into effect in 2004 so that the Commonwealth would help defray the expense to local school districts for providing legally mandated special education supports and services to children with severe disabilities.

Special education is paid for from four major sources – the general funds of the town, federal special education grants (IDEA grants), Chapter 70 funds, and the state Circuit Breaker grant. The state's Special Education Circuit Breaker program reimburses local school districts for a portion of their costs above a certain threshold for educating students with severe high-needs. The threshold for the eligibility is tied to four times the state average foundation budget per pupil as calculated under the Chapter 70 education funding law. The state is required to pay up to 75 percent of the costs above that threshold.

This Coalition also supports full funding for special education within Chapter 70 provided there are no unintended consequences of decreased funding for Circuit Breaker.

How the Special Education Circuit Breaker Benefits Students and School Districts

- Circuit Breaker funding helps to offset the costs for specialized services for the increasing number of children with severe disabilities, including students with specific health care needs, autism and other neurological disabilities.
- Funding follows students whose programs exceeds 4x the average foundation amount in any setting.
- Schools and families support the need for Circuit Breaker funding to support students with significant special education needs.
- Local school districts can better support the costs associated with services necessary for students with significant disabilities who are entitled to a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment.
- Circuit Breaker provides a critical financial support for districts to deliver mandated special education services and programs, rather than utilizing other costly administrative processes which reduce financial resources necessary to secure services/programs for students.
- After a delay in implementation in FY'21 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it is expected that in FY'22 the Student Opportunity Act will provided for 25% of out-of-district transportation costs to be a reimbursable expense at 75%, secondary to instructional costs. This is estimated to \$22.5 million in the new fiscal year.

The mission of the Massachusetts Coalition for Special Education Funding is to fully fund the Commonwealth's special education circuit breaker program.