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MIRA FY10 House Ways & Means Budget Analysis

On April 15, 2009, the House Committee on Ways & Means released the House Ways & Means version of the budget. Considering the current fiscal realities in Massachusetts and across the U.S., returns were mixed with all program receiving cuts of different degrees and one being completely eliminated. Many of the immigrant community's friends and allies have been hit hard by the House Ways & Means budget. Local aid has been cut significantly and other essential programs and services have been slashed or eliminated. As a member of the Stop the Cuts Coalition, MIRA will work actively to reduce the cuts and support new revenues. The following is an analysis of how the House Ways & Means budget impacted each of MIRA's budgetary priorities:

The Citizenship for New Americans Program (CNAP) (Line item 4003-0122) was funded at \$500,000 in the House Ways & Means budget, which represents a \$80,000 cut from the Governor's House 1 budget recommendation of \$580,000 and a decrease of \$150,000 from FY09. CNAP was also impacted by this year's 9C cuts, losing over \$40,000. MIRA thanks the House Ways & Means Committee for providing funding at levels equal to FY08, particularly considering the budget climate, but we hope to increase funding through the amendment process and Senate budget. Next Steps: MIRA is working with leaders in the House on strategy around an amendment and will send out an alert as soon as possible.

The House Ways & Means budget included **\$28,085,646 for Adult Basic Education and English for Speakers of Other Languages (Line item 7035-0002)**, which represents a reduction of more than \$3 million from FY09 levels of \$31.1 million, a reduction of \$1.9 million after this year's 9-C cuts brought the value down to \$29.9 million, and a cut of more than \$1.1 million from the Governor's recommendation of \$29,223,195. MIRA and its allies are asking for funding at FY08 levels of \$30.1 million. During times of economic crisis, MIRA and its allies feel that investing in the education and English language skills of the Commonwealth's workforce and residents is a sound investment. The ABE/ESOL line item has been hit by a number of cuts in the last year, which total \$3 million. Because everyone in the Commonwealth benefits from investments in our workforce, particularly in difficult economic times, we hope that the Senate budget recognizes this by funding ABE and ESOL at \$30.1 million. Next Steps: MIRA, with support of allies like MA Coalition for Adult Education (MCAE), are discussing strategy and potential amendments. Please be on the lookout for further information in the coming days.

The Workforce Training Fund (WTF) was funded at \$15 million (line item 7003-0701), a decrease of \$6 million from FY09 but an increase of \$3 million after the Governor's FY09 9-C

cuts. The Governor proposed \$21 million in the House 1 budget and MIRA was asking for full funding at \$21 million to help facilitate the implementation of a Dedicated Fund for Workplace Education that combines funding from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's workplace education grants with funds from the WTF to create a single, streamlined fund that expands resources for workplace education.

The line item containing the **Refugee and Immigrant Safety and Empowerment (RISE) Program (4513-1130) took a severe cut of over 40% down to \$4,058,264** from nearly \$6.4 million. MIRA is investigating the impact of this figure on the RISE program, as it is currently unknown how the reduced funding will impact immigrants and refugees' access to culturally and linguistically-appropriate domestic violence and sexual assault services. The earmark for services for immigrants and refugees was eliminated for a cut of at least \$300,000, with the only positive coming in the language of the line item, which remains strong. MIRA and its allies had been asking for level-funding of the line item at \$6.4 million with \$1,319,854 going to RISE. Next Steps: Representative Liz Malia of Boston will be filing an amendment for RISE.

The **MassHealth Outreach and Enrollment Grants line item (4000-0352) was eliminated from the House Ways & Means budget.** The elimination of the line item reflects the Governor's House 1 budget. MIRA and its allies are asking for level-funding of \$3.5 million. Unfortunately, the Governor and now House Ways & Means have failed to understand the importance of the grants to helping hard-to-reach populations, including immigrant communities and limited English proficient residents, retain coverage throughout the confusing enrollment reverification process. MIRA feels that the elimination of the line item will do nothing to reduce costs in the budget, as costly turnover in the system will increase and valuable time and energy will be lost navigating an incredibly complex system in which outreach and enrollment grantees have valuable expertise. The grants are also matched at 50% by the federal government, so the cost to the Commonwealth would only be \$1.75 million. Next Steps: Representative O'Day will be filing an amendment in the House to reinstate the line item at \$3.5 million.

Please contact your Representative or Senator to urge them to support immigrant communities throughout the Commonwealth by co-sponsoring the amendments for MIRA's budgetary priorities. Below is the contact information for Representatives and Senators as well as House and Senate leadership:

General Number: 617-722-2000

Speaker DeLeo: 617-722-2500

Senate Chairman of Ways & Means Panagiotakos: 617-722-1630

Senate President Murray: (617) 722-1500

If you do not know who your State Representative and/or Senator are, please visit:
<http://www.wheredoivotema.com>.