



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, November 15, 2023

CONTACT: news@hildrethinstitute.org

Boston, MA - The Hildreth Institute released the following statement today in response to Governor Maura Healey's announcement:

"We commend Governor Healey, her administration, and the Massachusetts legislature for their decisive action in redefining the landscape of higher education affordability and their progressive steps toward expanding tuition-free public higher education in our state.

"Today's announcement by Governor Healey is a significant milestone in our journey towards an affordable public higher education system.

"Of the \$84 million allocated for new student financial aid, \$62 million is earmarked for a new program "[the MassGrant Plus Expansion](#)", integral to moving towards a tuition-free public higher education in the state. This funding, sourced from the Fair Share income surtax on top earners, signifies a crucial shift towards an equitable educational landscape.

"This expansion redefines access for low-income students. It marks a progressive step towards reducing the financial burden on Pell-eligible students by covering the gap between their existing financial aid and the total cost of tuition and fees. Importantly, the program design now omits the previous requirement for low-income students to deplete their federally-determined expected family contribution.

"Moreover, the program's shift towards a middle-dollar approach is commendable. By providing up to \$1,200 for books and supplies to Pell-eligible students, it seeks to ensure that even those whose tuition and fees are fully covered by their existing aid eligibility can still receive financial support. This change is especially beneficial for community college students.

"MASSGrant Plus Expansion also seeks to ease the financial burden for middle-income families earning between \$73,000 and \$100,000 by covering up to half of a student's 'Unmet Need for Direct Costs' calculated as tuition and fees minus all existing granted aid.



“We are particularly heartened by the comprehensive nature of this initiative. By encompassing not only community colleges but also State Universities and UMass Campuses, it is poised to cover the unmet tuition and mandatory fee costs of approximately 25,000 low-income students across all public higher education sectors in Massachusetts. Eligible students for the MASSGrant Plus Expansion will benefit from these funds, retroactively applied from the start of the Fall 2023 semester.

“We also extend our praise for the administration's foresight in extending financial aid to qualifying undocumented immigrants who have completed high school in Massachusetts. This decision resonates deeply with our ethos of fostering an inclusive and transformative educational landscape.

“As a trusted source of independent research, we are heartened to see our research-driven recommendations reflected in these policy decisions. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the growing complexity of the financial aid landscape. In our quest to make higher education more accessible and affordable, it will be imperative to prioritize simplifying and streamlining the myriad of programs.

“Clear, concise messaging about these programs is essential, as it will empower students to fully leverage the resources at their disposal. The Hildreth Institute is committed to working with the administration and the legislature to ensure that these necessary clarifications and simplifications are achieved, further enhancing the effectiveness of our shared vision for a more accessible and equitable higher education system in Massachusetts.

“While we remain steadfast in our commitment to promoting affordability, accountability, and equity in higher education, today's announcement is a significant milestone in our collective journey toward an inclusive and transformative educational landscape.

“At Hildreth Institute, we remain dedicated to our vision of an inclusive world-class public higher education system that enables students to achieve their educational and career goals without the burden of debt.”

The Hildreth Institute is a research and policy center dedicated to restoring the promise of higher education as an engine of upward mobility for all. We are committed to fixing the broken college financing system by promoting innovative policy solutions at the federal and state levels, in order to invest in higher education while eliminating the burden of student debt. We research, develop, and promote solutions for changes in public policies and institutional financial practices that will reduce costs to students and improve quality. Learn more at hildrethinstitute.org.

###