

THE AUDITOR'S REPORT



News & Updates

from the Office of the State Auditor Suzanne M. Bump

Making government work better



Suzanne M. Bump
State Auditor

Dear Friend,

It finally happened! It may have been a few weeks late, but a legislative conference committee produced a consensus budget, which was approved by the House and Senate and signed by the governor.

The budget enables the OSA to add a few auditors, but I was just as pleased that it also made important investments to support the Commonwealth's regional school districts. [Our report last October](#) highlighted the many challenges facing these districts, most notably the state's failure to keep its promise to fully reimburse them for their transportation costs.

While the budget falls short of full funding for regional school transportation costs, it does contain a significant increase in spending in this realm, which will help these schools avoid painful cuts in staffing and services. In addition, the budget also calls for the creation of a school transportation commission to further study this issue; this provides us with another opportunity to build support for this funding.

We should celebrate the progress we have made, but recognize our work to support regional school districts is not done. We must continue to ensure that lawmakers understand the importance of the Commonwealth keeping its commitment to our regional schools.



Thank you,

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Suzanne M. Bump
Auditor of the Commonwealth

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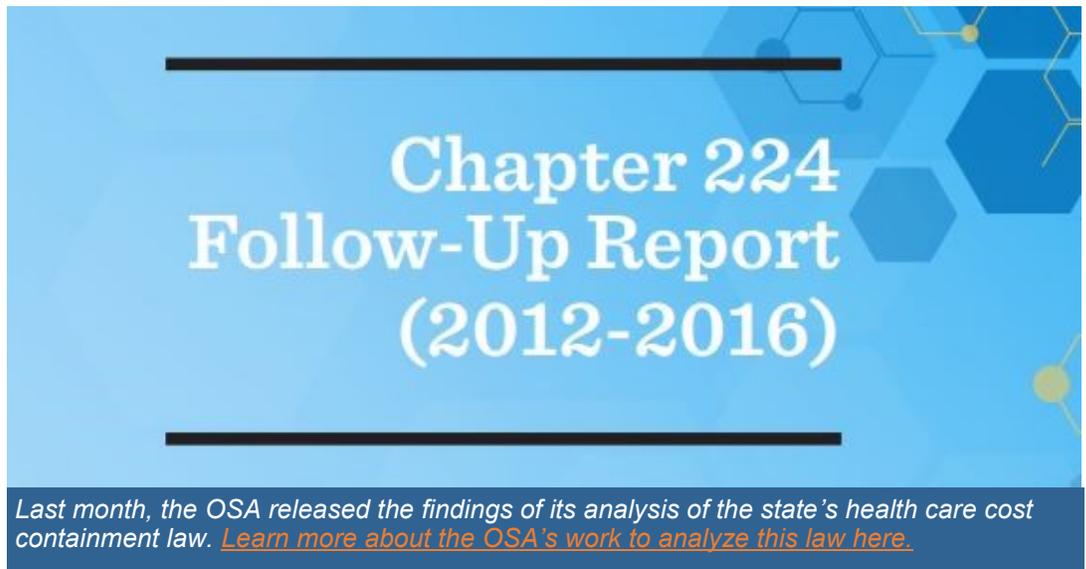
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OSA Focus: Evaluating Chapter 224

As part of the passage of the 2012 health care cost containment law (Chapter 224), the Massachusetts Legislature tasked the Office of the State Auditor (OSA) with conducting an analysis of the law to determine whether it was meeting its goals. Since then, the OSA has worked to collect and analyze data and conduct in-depth stakeholder interviews to understand the impact of this law on the Commonwealth.

Last month, the office [released the findings of its analysis](#). The report highlights three key areas that need attention from policymakers going forward.

First, it calls for greater effort to address the persistent racial and ethnic disparities in health outcomes, as well as disparities that exist for those with low incomes. Second, it highlights the need for more direct care workers in the Commonwealth to address the growing demand for services. Finally, it notes the need for better health care data to inform future policy decisions.

This report is intended to help the legislature develop policies to continue to address the growing cost of health care, while closing long-standing disparities in the Commonwealth.



Auditor Bump recently sat down with Brockton City Councilor At-Large Jean Bradley Derenoncourt to talk about the many ways her office is making state government work better. [Watch the whole interview here.](#)

OSA's Work Makes Headlines

[Fall River Herald News: Trump's SNAP plan latest effort to target most vulnerable](#)

Auditor Bump highlights the positive impacts the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) has in lifting families out of the poverty and boosting the economy. In her opinion piece, Bump encourages Bay State residents to reach out to their Congressional representatives to encourage them to fight against these changes.

[State audit faults MART on financial reporting](#)

In response to an audit by the OSA, the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority reports it is taking steps to improve oversight of vehicles to ensure they are used appropriately, the *Sentinel & Enterprise* reports.

[Salem State says corrections being made to track equipment](#)

Six months after an audit called on Salem State University to strengthen its inventory processes to protect against loss, theft, and misuse, the school reports it has completed a top-to-bottom inventory of information technology assets, the *Salem News* highlights.

Accountability in Action: Proactively Protecting Children

Late in 2017, the Office of State Auditor Suzanne M. Bump released an [audit of the Department of Children and Families \(DCF\)](#), which painted a stark picture. It found hundreds of incidents of children in the care of the Commonwealth being injured that went undetected by the agency. In addition, it noted that many instances of harm against children went unreported to the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) and local District Attorney's offices.

In the audit, [Bump called on the agency to take a more proactive approach to protecting children](#) and provided recommended steps that the agency should take to better identify abuse and neglect against children in its care.

In recent weeks, the OSA asked DCF for an update on its progress implementing the recommendations contained in the audit. In its response, DCF reports it has either begun the process of implementing or fully implemented each of the recommendations contained in the audit. This includes:

- Using MassHealth/Medicaid claims data to identify medical service needs and potential abuse or neglect of children in DCF care;
- Updating its criteria for classifying sexual assault against a child to be a critical incident;
- Tracking incidents of child-on-child violence; and
- Improving its process of reporting incidents of abuse and neglect to local District Attorney's offices and the OCA.

The improvements that DCF reports it has implemented as a result of the audit will undoubtedly go a long way toward keeping vulnerable children safer, and the agency should be commended for its response, but the work is not done. When it comes to protecting children in DCF care, we should constantly look for ways to improve, explore areas where the agency can do better, and develop innovative solutions to problems that are identified.



In December, Auditor Bump held a press conference to discuss the findings of her audit of the Department of Children and Families, and to call on the agency to take action to address the issues identified.



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