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CHAIRPERSON JAMES:

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Mr. Farrow? He is not here?

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Ann Witney?

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MS. WITNEY: Thank you. My name is Ann  
10 Witney, I'm a resident of the town of Harvard and I'm  
11 employed as a public school teacher in a suburb west of  
12 Boston.

13 I'm speaking in support of the  
14 Massachusetts Lottery and the aid it brings to cities  
15 and towns. During the season of taxes and town  
16 meetings, the theme in both the town I work and the one  
17 in which I live has been one of raising the money  
18 needed to meet the school budgets for the upcoming  
19 year.

20 Education budgets in Massachusetts are  
21 primarily funded with local property taxes. In recent  
22 years, the state has increased state funding for  
23 education as it implements education reform programs.  
24 But the base of educational funding continues to come

1 from local property taxes. These funds are no longer  
2 sufficient to meet the growing demands placed on  
3 education.

4           There is a statewide trend towards school  
5 populations increasing. Many towns, including my own,  
6 have been faced with expanding or reopening closed  
7 buildings or building new schools to accommodate this  
8 increase. Along with this is the need for additional  
9 teachers, buses and materials, such as computers, to  
10 meet newly implemented state standards.

11           Many cities and towns, not so fortunate,  
12 have class sizes at the elementary level of over 27  
13 students. As a first grade teacher I know this is  
14 unacceptable. To meet these and other needs, many town  
15 are faced with overrides of the Proposition 2«, which  
16 limits property tax increases to 2« percent.

17           Many experts feel the effects of increased  
18 population, coupled with the loss of capital from  
19 proposition 2« are just beginning to be felt. School  
20 budgets are not the only place where towns must face  
21 overrides and debt exclusions, so requests for, say, a  
22 new town fire truck, might color taxpayers' willingness  
23 to also pay higher taxes in order to hire new teachers.

1           Last year, the town in which I teach did  
2 not pass the override, a sign that taxpayers have had  
3 enough with increases. As a result, we are constantly  
4 faced with budget cuts. Happily, one increase that is  
5 in our favor is the aid sent to towns and cities from  
6 the State Lottery. Direct Lottery aid to cities and  
7 towns has increased in the last three years.

8           Some of the money received comes from the  
9 arts fund, which goes for example, to arts enrichment  
10 programs in the schools, an essential part of the  
11 curriculum. A much larger sum goes into the general  
12 operating budget of the town, which indirectly and  
13 directly supports the public schools. Money spent on  
14 public libraries, improved roads or fire and police  
15 protection or other town needs, thereby free up funds  
16 for education.

17           As an educator, I am of course concerned  
18 about the problems of compulsive gambling and I am  
19 pleased that the Lottery also recognizes this and  
20 contributes to programs to address this issue. The  
21 availability of Lottery funds helped to support  
22 excellence in schools. From my perspective, the  
23 Lottery is beneficial to the cities and towns of  
24 Massachusetts.

1 Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Thank you.