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Mass. seeks a voice in debt talks; Delegation warned of disproportionate cuts

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WASHINGTON - With \$1.5 trillion in federal spending potentially at stake, lobbyists have packed Capitol Hill in an effort to grab the attention of 12 debt supercommittee members. Count members of the Massachusetts congressional delegation among those eager to be heard.

Particularly high stakes for Massachusetts demand an aggressive defense of the state's interests, said Representative Edward J. Markey. Severe cuts in federal research grants and start-up money for businesses - from which Massachusetts industries and institutions disproportionately benefit - could damage the state's fragile economy, he warns in a report to other Bay State lawmakers.

"We are the brain state - we are a high-tech, clean-tech, biotech economic epicenter for the nation. These cuts could do serious damage unless they're done in a balanced way that spreads the burden in a way that's fair," said the Malden Democrat, who is the most senior member of the delegation.

The report, which Markey's office will release today, coincides with the first hearings of the supercommittee, a bipartisan group of six Democrats and six Republicans charged with slowing the growth of the federal debt by \$1.5 trillion to \$4 trillion. The rules setting up the committee give other members of Congress no formal mechanisms for molding or amending the plan while it's being developed. And they can only vote the final proposal up or down.

That leaves lawmakers such as Markey with few options but to directly plead with supercommittee members - including the Bay State senator John F. Kerry, a Democrat - to preserve funding and programs.

The article was an original response to the committee's...

