

**Massachusetts Department of Revenue  
Division of Local Services  
Municipal Data Bank/Local Aid Section**

**Moody's Definitions of Long-Term Bond Ratings**

**Source: Moody's on Municipals, An Introduction to Issuing Debt**

**Note: Moody's Massachusetts local government ratings were recalibrated to the Global Scale on April 23, 201**

**Aaa**

Bonds that are rated Aaa are judged to be of the best quality. They carry the smallest degree of investment risk and are generally referred to as "gilt edge." Interest payments are protected by a large or by an exceptionally stable margin and principal is secure. While the various protective elements are likely to change, such changes as can be visualized are most unlikely to impair the fundamentally strong position of such issues.

**Aa**

Bonds that are rated Aa are judged to be of high quality by all standards. Together with the Aaa group they comprise what are generally known as high-grade bonds. They are rated lower than the best bonds because margins of protection may not be as large as in Aaa securities or fluctuation of protective elements may be of greater amplitude or there may be other elements present which make the long-term risks appear somewhat larger than in Aaa securities.

**A**

Bonds that are rated A possess many favorable investment attributes and are to be considered as upper medium-grade obligations. Factors giving security to principal and interest are considered adequate, but elements may be present which suggest a susceptibility to impairment some time in the future.

**Baa**

Bonds that are rated Baa are considered as medium-grade obligations; they are neither highly protected nor poorly secured. Interest payments and principal security appear adequate for the present but certain protective elements may be lacking or may be characteristically unreliable over any great length of time. Such bonds lack outstanding investment characteristics and, in fact, have speculative characteristics as well.

**Ba**

Bonds that are rated Ba are judged to have speculative elements; their future cannot be considered as well assured. Often the protection of interest and principal payments may be very moderate, and thereby not well safeguarded during both good and bad times over the future. Uncertainty of position characterizes the bonds in this class.

**B**

Bonds that are rated B generally lack characteristics of the desirable investment. Assurance of interest and principal payments or maintenance of other terms of the contract over any long period of time may be small.

The bonds in the **Aa**, **A**, **Baa**, **Ba** and **B**, groups which Moody's believes possesses the strongest investment attributes are designated by the symbols Aa1, A1, Baa1, Ba1, and B1. In 1997, Moody's started to rate new public finance issues using expanded bond rating symbols to include modifiers 2 and 3 to the existing Numerical 1. The modifier 2 indicates that the issue is in the mid-range of its category and the modifier 3 indicates that it is in the low end.

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**Caa, Ca and C**

Caa Bonds that are rated Caa are of poor standing. Such issues may be in default or there may be present elements of danger with respect to principal or interest. Ca Bonds that are rated Ca represent obligations which are speculative in a high degree. Such issues are often in default or have other marked shortcomings. C Bonds that are rated C are the lowest rated class of bonds, and issues so rated can be regarded as having extremely poor prospects of ever attaining any real investment standing.