

THE WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS GROUP

EMPath (Economic Mobility Pathways)
Massachusetts AFL-CIO
Massachusetts Business Roundtable

Massachusetts Communities Action Network
Massachusetts Workforce Association
SkillWorks: Partners for a Productive Workforce

June 14, 2020

Chairman Eric P. Lesser

Chairwoman Ann-Margaret Ferrante

Joint Committee on Economic Development and Emerging Technologies

State House

Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairs Lesser and Ferrante:

We appreciate the work you are doing to respond to the state's tremendous economic needs during this pandemic. Having worked with you both, we know that you will prioritize equity in your recovery plans: evaluating investments for their ability to close racial, opportunity and geographic inequity gaps.

While the needs are certainly vast, there are evidence-based interventions proven to get people back to work, move up career ladders, and increase their incomes to family sustaining wages.

We submit these ideas for your consideration for the 2020 Economic Development Bill.

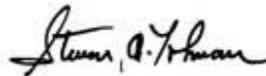
- 1) The Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund has been capitalized in several economic development bills in the past. With the pandemic-induced high unemployment rate, there is an urgent need for re-skilling and upskilling to help workers whose jobs are not coming back in the foreseeable future (primarily in the hospitality and service industry) and to train people for in demand industries (health care, IT.)
 - a. Learn to Earn, a program of the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund, focuses on people with additional barriers to employment such as involvement with the criminal justice system, disabilities, lack of high school diploma or equivalent, lack of access to child care, etc. In a newly slack labor market, where nearly 1 million residents have applied for unemployment benefits since the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, many have been thrust into a position of economic uncertainty, if not crisis, and facing barriers to reemployment. And those with existing barriers, who were already struggling to find employment now face even longer odds to gain employment. Occupational training, apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs that provide access to support and wrap-around services will be critical for the many residents who may not otherwise be able to successfully complete programs.
- 2) The Capital Skills grants for training equipment and labs at vocational schools, comprehensive schools and community colleges have been a huge success in expanding access to high-quality career and technical programs for in-demand jobs. We hope this program is reauthorized.
- 3) Establish a new capital program to build wings onto vocational technical schools. It would be an efficient and effective way to reduce waiting lists. Building onto existing school structures

- 4) would be much less costly and faster to authorize and build than going through the School Building Authority process of requesting a whole new school (which takes 6 years and is hugely competitive).
- 5) Support for the Governor's proposal for Career Technical Institutes (CTI). This would add second and third shifts to the vocational technical schools and dramatically increase the number of working (and out of work) adults and out of school, disconnected young people who could get a new skill and credential. Governor Baker proposes \$6.9 M in 7002-1091.
 - a. Part II of the CTI initiative is the Career and Technical Education Program - this would increase access to vocational technical high schools with waiting lists by adding afternoon classes for students in comprehensive high schools. Governor Baker proposed \$1.5 Million in 7035-0001 for FY21.

We appreciate the chance to share these recommendations and would be happy to discuss them further. Thank you for your continued leadership.
Sincerely,



Chris Kealey, Deputy Director
Mass Business Roundtable



Steve Tolman, President
MA AFL-CIO



Lew Finfer, Director
Mass Communities Action Network



Marybeth Campbell, Director
Worcester Community Action



Elizabeth Babcock, Executive Director
EMPath Economic Mobility Pathways



Tonja Mettlach, Executive Director
Mass Workforce Association



Keith Mahoney
Vice President for Public Affairs
The Boston Foundation



Kaitlyn Bean, Senior Program Director
SkillWorks



Executive Director
Workforce Solutions Group