



June 12, 2023

The Honorable Jason M. Lewis
Chair, Joint Committee on Education
24 Beacon St., Room 511-B
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Denise C. Garlick
Chair, Joint Committee on Education
24 Beacon St., Room 473G
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chair Lewis and Chair Garlick:

On behalf of our members, we write to express our support for House Bill 538/Senate Bill 274, *An Act to Improve Access, Opportunity, and Capacity in Massachusetts Vocational-Technical Education*, filed by Representative Moran, Representative Scanlon, and Senator Feeney.

The Massachusetts Workforce Association (MWA) is a statewide membership association that leads, advocates, and convenes on behalf of the state's workforce development system. MWA provides a unified voice for the state's regionally-led workforce development system to ensure it is responsive to the dynamic demands of businesses, job seekers, incumbent workers, and youth throughout the Commonwealth.

In 2018, the Alliance for Vocational Technical Education (AVTE) released a white-paper on High Quality Career and Technical Education in Massachusetts. Their research indicated that career technical education (CTE) programs deliver tremendous value statewide to students, families, communities, and employers. Graduates of CTE programs: (1) secure high-wage jobs; (2) possess strong academic, technical, and professional skills; (3) are well prepared for further training in skilled occupations and careers and; (4) enroll in and graduate from 2- and 4-year post-secondary schools. Increasing access to CTE is an important goal of AVTE and MWA.

H.538/S.274 can play an important role in creating additional CTE pathways for youth throughout the state by:

- Establishing a \$3B infrastructure fund for career and technical schools and programs, and directing the Mass School Building Authority (MSBA) to increase the reimbursement rate for regional vocational-technical or agricultural high schools, and schools with five or more Ch. 74 programs. This investment will support and encourage expansion of these



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valuable programs across the state.

- Integrating CTE more explicitly into the mission of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) through the establishment of an Office of Career Technical Education. The duties of the office would include executing a statewide marketing campaign and promoting access to seventh- and eighth-grade students by voc-tech schools. The office would also promote attainment of industry recognized credentials and increased use of articulation agreements with colleges and community colleges.

Over the past several years, the MassHire Workforce Boards and Career Centers have been partnering with local voc-tech schools on the development of Career Technical Institutes (CTI). This relationship helps schools stay current with industry demand and understand the skills that are most needed by businesses in their area. CTI also expands access to CTE facilities for adult training programs in the evenings.

The Commonwealth faces a shortage of skilled workers that MWA and its members are dedicated to addressing. By increasing access to CTE, we can help ensure that teens and young adults get the skills and experience in demand by local employers. We ask that the Committee give a favorable report to H.538/S.274.

Thank you for your support of the state's education, workforce development, and training systems.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Raija Vaisanen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Raija Vaisanen
Executive Director
Massachusetts Workforce Association