



November 24, 2020

The Honorable Aaron Michlewitz, Chair, House Ways and Means  
The Honorable Michael J. Rodrigues, Chair, Senate Ways and Means  
The Honorable Denise C. Garlick, Vice Chair, House Ways and Means  
The Honorable Cindy F. Friedman, Vice Chair, Senate Ways and Means  
The Honorable Todd M. Smola, Ranking Member, House Ways and Means  
The Honorable Patrick O'Connor, Ranking Member, Senate Ways and Means

Dear Chair Michlewitz, Chair Rodrigues, Vice Chair Garlick, Vice Chair Friedman, Ranking Member Smola, and Ranking Member O'Connor:

On behalf of the Commonwealth's regional workforce boards and career centers, we write to express our appreciation for the many investments in job training, adult education, skill development, career pathways, apprenticeship, and other industry based-sector partnerships in the FY21 budget.

The Massachusetts Workforce Association (MWA) is the voice for the Commonwealth's workforce development system, encompassing an array of partners and stakeholders, including the MassHire Career Centers and Workforce Boards. 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.

The funding recommendations below will provide the strongest support for workforce development in the FY21 budget:

- **MassHire Career Centers (7003-0803):** MWA supports the Senate appropriation of \$5 million for operation of the MassHire Career Centers. The MassHire Career Centers, located in every region throughout the Commonwealth, are the "front door" of the state's workforce development system. Located within the 16 MassHire Workforce regions, Career Centers serve as a vital link between job seekers and businesses to bring about economic opportunity for residents and employers alike. Seemingly overnight the system went from providing mainly in person services to having to provide 100% virtual services for all job seekers and employers, even to those customers with limited digital resources/literacy. To date there has been no direct COVID/CARES act investment in reemployment (MA lost federal WIOA funding this year).
- **Career Technical Institutes (7002-1091):** MWA supports the Senate appropriation of \$4M for the Career Technical Initiative (CTI), which will focus on addressing the persistent skills gap we have between people looking to work their way up the jobs ladder, and the needs and expectations of many of our employers. To address this, the plan is to make multi-year investments in our vocational schools to give thousands more people—adults and high schoolers—access to "hands on" educational and training opportunities that have otherwise not been available to them. Graduates from the CTI initiative will help skill up and diversify our workforce by attracting learners and workers from the MassHire network and community stakeholders to recruit for the initiative.



- **Advanced Manufacturing (7002-0020):** MWA supports the Senate appropriation of \$2.5 million for a precision manufacturing program administered by the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development. This program supports four regional consortiums focused on meeting manufacturers needs through a fully coordinated manufacturing training system across the state. In addition, the training focuses on those who are unemployed, underemployed, and underrepresented populations including veterans, minorities, and women. Despite the pandemic, manufacturers around the state are still seeking skilled workers to maintain their competitiveness.

The Commonwealth's workforce boards and career centers are on the front lines in addressing the skills gap that persists in the Commonwealth. Every day they work with employers, community colleges, post-secondary institutions, high schools, nonprofits, and career and technical education programs, to ensure Massachusetts employers continue to grow and benefit from the state's number one resource, its talent. In February 2020, Massachusetts had an unemployment rate of 3.5% compared to October where the unemployment rate was 7.4 % and much higher in many regions. Note this does not take into account those who have stopped looking for work, those whose hours have been reduced or the concerning number of people who have dropped out of the labor force, predominantly women. For more on the economic effects of the pandemic induced recession in Massachusetts, and links to state and local area statistics, see a [Massachusetts Workforce Association October 30th Blog Post](#). Now more than ever, we need to invest in workforce development to ensure residents and businesses successfully emerge from this recession.

Thank you for your partnership and support of the state's workforce development system. Please do not hesitate to contact us at any time if you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

Raija Vaisanen  
Associate Director  
Massachusetts Workforce Association