



June 14, 2021

The Honorable Aaron Michlewitz, Chair, House Ways and Means  
The Honorable Michael J. Rodrigues, Chair, Senate Ways and Means  
The Honorable Ann-Margaret Ferrante, 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 Ferrante, 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 FY22 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 FY22 budget:

- **MassHire Career Centers (7003-0803):** MWA supports the Senate appropriation of \$7.5 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 \$6M for the Career Technical Initiative (CTI), which will focus on addressing the persistent skills gap for people looking to work their way up the jobs ladder, and the needs and expectations of many of employers. To address this, CTI would make multi-year investments in 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.
- **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



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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.

- **YouthWorks (7002-0012):** MWA supports the House appropriation of \$24 million for YouthWorks. YouthWorks is a proven model to help teens and young adults get the skills and experience needed to find and keep jobs. By expanding job opportunities for young people, and supporting them in acquiring the skills they need in the workplace, YouthWorks is part of a system creating a pipeline of skilled workers for employers throughout Massachusetts.

The effects of COVID-19 on the workforce system, the people it serves, and our economy has been devastating. Since March 2020 over 1.9 million individuals in Massachusetts have experienced an employment interruption and almost 250,000 individuals will not have jobs to return to. As we emerge from this public health crisis, we must be intentional with investments and policies to ensure a just and equitable recovery. 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,

Tonja Mettlach  
Executive Director  
Massachusetts Workforce Association