



Massachusetts Workforce Association Public Policy Committee Meeting Notes

July 29, 2021

Introductions and check-in

- Participants: Casey Tiefenwerth, Lisa Vermette, Kevin Lynn, Chris Albrizio-Lee, Joe Peters, Robert Bower, Rebecca Bialecki, Ron Iacobucci, Kathleen Weislein, Tonja Mettlach, Raija Vaisanen

FY22 Budget/ARPA Funding Updates and Discussion

- Tonja updated the committee on a recent meeting with Sen. Rodrigues, Chair of Senate Committee on Ways and Means. In the meeting we concentrated on ARPA funds. The Senator talked about how the Legislature plans to hold 6 hearings and be deliberate as they set priorities for federal ARPA funds.
- The hearing on workforce and housing was held on July 27th and Tonja testified and submitted written testimony.
- Committee discussion:
 - Staff and Training: Even with an increase in federal WIOA allocation, still short in some regions than what they had through ARRA in the Great Recession. Training dollars for ITAs don't go far enough. Need FY22 \$ faster.
 - Need money as soon as possible to respond.
 - Youth Programs from a Workforce Board point of view - Connecting Activities and YouthWorks don't go far enough to meet the demand.
 - Set up regional meetings soon with local legislators so they know the importance of using money for training. Include more creative options for pay while you go through training, like apprenticeships do.
 - Stipend idea -
 - How do you do that?
 - Kevin discussed how his staff skews older and they are retiring. Kevin is having to replace them and their salaries are not competitive with the market. Which means he is not getting the right people with the right skills for the job.
 - Rebecca talked about childcare concerns for staff and job seekers.
 - Lisa talked about the great need for digital training and less red tape. Everyone needs these key functional skills.
 - Casey discussed the need for flexible funding. They are currently working with community colleges right now to expand training opportunities with them
 - Major challenges - timing of funding/cash flow, variable levels of funding year to year. Some orgs work with only 80% of their budgets year to year, to make sure they carry in 20% in case of funding cuts in a future year or unexpected costs. Others start the year in the red and "claw their way" into the black.
 - Technology for staff to be able to do their jobs more efficiently and effectively

H.2059, *An Act Expanding Worker Ownership Training Opportunities*

- Tonja noted that there is some confusion around this legislation and MWA is not going to take a position until we learn more. It appears that Rep. Mark is not the lead sponsor on this bill. We will wait for more information from WSG before proceeding.

Issue Selection Discussion

- Tonja/Raija discussed a new process going forward to get committee member feedback on legislation. Tonja/Raija will begin filling out the issue selection documents, prepare short bill summaries, and will make recommendations on legislation for committee members. This will make the process easier and quicker for evaluating potential legislation for support and will continue to allow for committee input and feedback.