

July 6, 2021

Representative Alice Hanlon Peisch, Chair
Joint Committee on Education
State House, Room 473G
Boston, MA 02133

Senator Jason M. Lewis, Chair
Joint Committee on Education
State House, Room 511-B
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chair Peisch and Chair Lewis,

On behalf of the [Massachusetts Business Coalition on Skills](#) (MBCS), we are writing in support of H.666 / S.348 and H.652 / S.357 because they increase access to career/vocational technical education (CVTE) in Massachusetts. The MBCS – a coalition of 28 diverse business organizations from across the state that advocates for equitable skills development policies – prioritizes eliminating Chapter 74 waitlists and expanding access to CVTE because CVTE is an effective measure for closing Massachusetts' skills gaps and provides students with greater economic opportunity.

CVTE helps close skills gaps to the benefit of employers and students – the state's future employees. For employers, CVTE provides a direct pipeline of homegrown talent trained for in-demand jobs using labor-market aligned curriculum. As a result, employers prefer to hire CVTE graduates for both entry-level and higher-level positions.ⁱ For students, CVTE provides both academic and career benefits. Compared to their peers at comprehensive high schools, Massachusetts students with a CVTE concentration have higher graduation rates and MCAS scores, in addition to greater future earnings.ⁱⁱ

But CVTE's effectiveness and increasing popularity among employers and students is creating substantial waitlists across the Commonwealth. A 2014 Northeastern University School of Law study concluded that Massachusetts had more than 4,600 students on CVTE waitlists.ⁱⁱⁱ More recently, a 2021 Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) survey found that there are 1.75 CVTE applicants for every available classroom seat and that 44 out of 58 schools and programs contacted by DESE reported having a waitlist for school year 2020-2021.^{iv}

Student demand for CVTE programs continues to exceed the annual supply of CVTE seats, largely due to school building capacity constraints.^v To help close skills gaps and promote greater economic opportunity, Massachusetts needs to increase the physical capacity of its CVTE schools, and the following bills create ways to do that.

The Coalition supports **H.666 / S.348, *An Act to expand the capacity of career technical schools and programs***, filed by Representative Frank A. Moran and Senator Eric P. Lesser, because it includes several proposals that will expand CVTE schools' footprint and increase enrollment. The proposals include a \$3 billion bond authorization to replace and renovate CVTE infrastructure and to purchase modern training equipment. The bills also would create cost savings and flexibility for districts by allowing them to lease educational buildings for up to 50 years instead of just five years.

The Coalition supports several other capacity-building proposals in H.666 / S.348 that are also in **H.652 / S.357, *An Act to increase student access to career technical education schools and programs which are aligned with regional labor market needs***, filed by Representative Kate Lipper-Garabedian and Senator Jason M. Lewis. Both sets of bills propose a new Funding Commission to recommend ways for the state to better support evolving CVTE funding needs. The bills also propose a new Office of Career Technical Education within DESE dedicated to improving skills development through CVTE and that is charged with promoting capacity expansion demonstration programs where students split time between their comprehensive high school and a school offering Chapter 74 programs.

It is imperative – for employers, students, and the state's economy – that Massachusetts eliminates Chapter 74 waitlists and increases its CVTE capacity.

Employers across the Commonwealth struggle to fill open positions with employees who possess the technical skillsets required for employers to run or expand their businesses successfully. Shrinking CVTE waitlists can increase the supply of homegrown talent with the skills needed to fill these positions.

For students, increasing CVTE capacity expands career potential and closes opportunity gaps. Because its curriculum is aligned with the in-demand skills and competencies sought after by employers, CVTE prepares students who can access this learning model for college pathways and careers that provide financial stability and meet growing labor market demands. Reducing Chapter 74 waitlists will eliminate the ongoing capacity constraints that disproportionately impact students of color, English language learners, the economically-disadvantaged, and students with disabilities because they receive fewer offers of admission to the limited supply of CVTE seats compared to admission offers to their peers.^{vi}

Massachusetts' economic success is directly tied to the strength and skills of our future workforce. Eliminating Chapter 74 waitlists and expanding access to CVTE will expand the workforce pipeline and help to maintain talent as the state's competitive edge.

Thank you for your consideration.

Massachusetts Business Coalition on Skills

- 1Berkshire
- Amplify Latinx
- Associated General Contractors of Mass
- Bedford Area Chamber of Commerce
- Better Business Bureau Serving Eastern MA, ME, RI & VT
- Black Economic Council of Massachusetts
- Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce
- Kendall Square Association
- Mass Technology Leadership Council
- Massachusetts Association of Insurance Agents
- Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education
- Massachusetts Business Roundtable
- Massachusetts State Automobile Dealers Association
- Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation
- Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Neponset River Regional Chamber
- Newton-Needham Regional Chamber of Commerce
- North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce
- North Shore Chamber of Commerce
- One SouthCoast Chamber
- Quincy Chamber of Commerce
- Retailers Association of Massachusetts
- Somerville Chamber of Commerce
- Springfield Regional Chamber
- Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council
- Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce

ⁱ Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy. 2016. [The Critical Importance of Vocational Education in the Commonwealth.](#)

ⁱⁱ Dougherty, Shaun M. 2018. [The Effect of Career and Technical Education on Human Capital Accumulation: Causal Evidence from Massachusetts.](#) *Education Finance and Policy* 13(2): 119-148; Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy. 2016. [The Critical Importance of Vocational Education in the Commonwealth](#); American Institutes for Research. 2020. [Career and Technical Education and Postsecondary Student Outcomes in Massachusetts: Career Clusters and Student Groups, Teacher Licensure, and Student Entry.](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ Northeastern University School of Law. 2014. [Manufacturing Success: Improved Access to Vocational Education in Massachusetts.](#)

^{iv} Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. 2021. [Massachusetts Career Vocational Technical Education Waitlist Report for 2020-2021 \(FY21\).](#)

^v Northeastern University School of Law. 2014. [Manufacturing Success: Improved Access to Vocational Education in Massachusetts](#); Dougherty, Shaun M. and Isabel Harbaugh. 2019. [Policy Brief: Understanding Excess Demand for High-quality Career and Technical Education in Massachusetts.](#)

^{vi} Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. 2021. [Massachusetts Career Vocational Technical Education Waitlist Report for 2020-2021 \(FY21\).](#)