



June 11, 2018

House Ways and Means Chairman Jeffrey Sánchez
Representative Stephen Kulik
Representative Todd Smola

Senate Ways and Means Chairwoman Karen Spilka
Senator Joan Lovely
Senator Vinny deMacedo

The State House
Boston, MA 02111

Dear Committee on Conference:

I am writing on behalf of the Massachusetts Business Roundtable to respectfully request your consideration for the following items in the FY19 state budget proposals passed by the House (H.4401) and Senate (S.2530). For more than three decades, the Roundtable has convened CEOs and senior executives from diverse industry sectors across the state to drive policies that strengthen the long-term economic prosperity of the Commonwealth. Roundtable member companies employ more than 250,000 people and are committed to developing sound policies that benefit the entire state. Toward that end, we respectfully request your consideration of the following recommendations, consistent with our shared objective of making Massachusetts a highly competitive place to do business:

Early Childhood Education

3000-1042 – Rate Reserve for Early Educations – House funding level of \$20M

3000-7066 – Workforce Development Initiative – House funding level of \$8.5M

House Outside Section 32 – Early Education and Care Workforce Council

The Roundtable was pleased to participate in and help lead Speaker DeLeo's Early Education and Care Business Advisory Group. The group found that the current early childhood workforce is "in crisis," and recommended a multi-pronged strategy to address it which included stabilizing current providers while simultaneously developing a workforce development system for early educators. As was stated in the Business Advisory Group's report, "the most significant determinant of quality is the educator leading the classroom. Therefore, doing what is best to support the Commonwealth's children, working families, communities, and successful economic growth rests on developing, professionalizing and retaining the early education and care workforce." The three items listed above in the House budget are consistent with the Business Advisory Group's recommendations and we urge the Conference Committee to recede to the House on these items.

Workforce Development

7002-1080 – Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund – Senate funding level of \$5M

7002-0020 – Advanced and Precision Manufacturing – Senate funding level of \$2.5M

7003-0150 – Job Training for Workforce Re-Entry – House funding level of \$500,000

The Roundtable's members continue to highlight the importance of recruiting and retaining talent as a top priority to ensure that businesses remain competitive in the global economy. The Roundtable has worked closely with the Workforce Solutions Group, which includes leaders from community-based organizations, labor and faith-based groups, to advocate for sector-based job training opportunities that lead directly to job placement. We respectfully urge you to accept Senate line item 7002-1080, Senate line item 7002-0020 and House line item 7003-0150. These appropriations will fund programs that have a proven track record of success in providing economic opportunities for workers across the state to fill the jobs that are in high demand from employers across a variety of industry sectors.

Computer Science Education

7007-1202 – Computer Science Education – House funding level of \$850,000

In a survey of employers from across Massachusetts, 75% indicate that they can't find workers with the talent necessary to fill open jobs. Increasingly, computer literacy and computational thinking are skills necessary for employment today and certainly into the future. We respectfully urge you to accept House line item 7007-1202, which requires a 1:1 match. This appropriation will leverage private dollars to fund ongoing efforts by school superintendents and the business community working together to implement a broad-based education/workforce strategy to annually increase the number of Massachusetts students prepared to pursue computing technology careers.

Transportation

Senate Outside Section 173 – Smarter Tolling Program

Along with talent development and the items addressed previously, Roundtable members identify transportation infrastructure as a perennial top priority area for public policy investment. MBR believes that investing in transportation—roads, bridges, mass transit—is a key ingredient to strengthening the state's economic competitiveness. MBR has long advocated for the implementation of meaningful reforms, management improvements, greater performance measurement, and better use of technology to ensure that people can commute to work and school and that goods & services can move efficiently throughout the state.

The Roundtable believes that the use of technology and new innovations must be at the forefront of public policy that provides consumers more choices and a better, more cost-effective way to reach their destinations. The "smarter tolling program" in Senate Section 173 is just that – an innovative use of technology to address the growing problem of congestion on our roadways. Congestion is a drain on our economy, frustrating to commuters, and costly to both employers and employees in terms of time and productivity. This section provides a modest pilot of an innovative concept that has proven to reduce congestion elsewhere. We respectfully suggest that it is worth trying here and urge the adoption of Senate Section 173.

Thank you for your consideration, and for your efforts to produce a fair, sound and responsible state budget. We are grateful for your work and commitment to the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,



JD Chesloff
Executive Director