

2018 Legislative Session Wrap-Up

Guided by the Principles and Priorities identified by MBR's Membership, the Roundtable advocated for a variety of public policy issues during the legislative session that ended on July 31, 2018. Following is a summary of some of the issues MBR addressed, and their result at the end of the session.

Early Childhood Education

WHAT MBR SAID

"The Roundtable was pleased to participate in and help lead Speaker DeLeo's Early Education and Care Business Advisory Group. 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.'"

MBR Letter to Budget Conference Committee, 6/11/18

RESULT

New \$30M in funding to support the early childhood workforce.

Energy Cost and Reliability

WHAT MBR SAID

"MBR supports a balanced approach to meeting regional energy supply needs and promoting long-term economic development that includes: growth in renewable energy sources; increased supply of natural gas; continued focus on energy efficiency; and promoting new technologies."

MBR Public Statement, 2/13/18

RESULT

Energy legislation became law that authorized an additional procurement of offshore wind power, increased the renewable portfolio standard that governs the amount of clean energy utilities must purchase, and established an energy storage target.

MISSION

MBR's mission is to strengthen the state's economic vitality. MBR engages with public and private leaders to develop public policy solutions that enhance Massachusetts' long-term competitive position and make it a highly desirable place to do business within a global economy.

VALUE PROPOSITION

For more than three decades, the Massachusetts Business Roundtable has convened CEOs and senior executives from diverse industry sectors across the state to drive policies that strengthen the longterm economic prosperity of the Commonwealth. The Roundtable serves as a platform for members to work collaboratively with an influential network of public officials and business leader peers to express ideas, develop innovative solutions and influence the state's public policy agenda. Roundtable member companies employ more than 250,000 people across the state and are committed to developing sound policies that benefit the entire state.

Health Care Reform

WHAT MBR SAID

"The Roundtable is guided by two fundamental principles as we engage with policy makers on health care reform: 1) Any policy solution must be aligned with solving the problem, which has been defined as controlling the unsustainable increases in the cost of MassHealth; and 2) if a policy intervention results in increased costs, it should be rejected... Previous iterations of health care reform have focused on market-based solutions such as payment reform, competition and transparency to slow the growth in health care spending. The Roundtable for years has promoted these market-based solutions to addressing health care costs and we remain committed to that strategy."

MBR Letter to Health Care Conference Committee, 7/13/18

RESULT

This proposal did not become law in this legislative session.

Housing Choice Initiative

WHAT MBR SAID

"In order to maximize economic growth and increase talent retention, the Commonwealth needs to continue to develop and enhance public policies to improve its transportation infrastructure and the affordability of housing as these key factors influence the retention of talented workers in Massachusetts. The Housing Choice Initiative is an important step in the Commonwealth's pursuit of that strategy."

MBR Letter to the House Ways and Means Committee, 3/15/18

RESULT

This proposal did not become law in this legislative session.

"Grand Bargain"

WHAT MBR SAID

"The Roundtable firmly believes that achieving legislative solutions to complex public policy issues is preferable to the initiative petition process, a winner-take-all approach with little room for thoughtful discourse, deliberation and compromise."

MBR Public Statement, 6/20/18

RESULT

The Roundtable helped negotiate legislative solutions, avoiding three statewide ballot questions on Paid Family & Medical Leave, Minimum Wage, and a Sales Tax Reduction.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

"Sex trafficking is a business issue."

MBR is a founding member of Employers Against Sex Trafficking (EAST)

"An average of 20,000 ads for paid sex are posted online every month in Boston, and each of those ads receives an average of 52 responses. And if that isn't alarming enough, the peak time that people are searching for sex online is 2:00 p.m.—right in the middle of the workday. When law enforcement placed decoy ads, they were able to trace 13 percent of responses back to Boston-area businesses. That means that employees may be using company resources—phones or computers—to arrange for paid sex while they're on the clock. Sex trafficking is a business issue."

BBJ Joint Op-Ed with the Alliance for Business Leadership, 6/30/18

"Sex trafficking and the exploitation of young women and girls is unconscionable and heartbreaking. With demand too often occurring during the work day, businesses can take action to address it. Joining forces with Attorney General Healey and Mayor Walsh to urge employers to adopt zero tolerance policies is a no-brainer and the Roundtable is pleased to support this effort."

Press Release Announcing the Formation of EAST, 5/29/18

Non-Competition Agreements

WHAT MBR SAID

"Selective use of non-competes enables [businesses] to protect legitimate business interests, including the significant investments that allow their companies to be the global leaders in their industries and to create jobs in the Commonwealth."

Coalition Letter to Conference Committee, 7/19/16

RESULT

Compromise legislation negotiated with Speaker Robert DeLeo became law, limiting non-competes to one year, exempting low-wage workers, ensuring 10-day advanced notice, giving employees the opportunity to consult a lawyer when signing a non-compete, but does not require companies that compensate employees at the time they sign non-competes to pay them again during the restricted period.

STEM Education

WHAT MBR SAID

"Computational thinking and computer science are crucial skills for the future workforce. MassCAN is having significant impact on school districts, teachers, and students across the Commonwealth by continuing to support the focus on, and this essential investment in, computer science education and digital literacy."

Coalition Letter to House and Senate Ways and Means, 6/28/18

RESULT

\$850,000 for MassCAN (Massachusetts Computing Attainment Network)

Tax Return Confidentiality

WHAT MBR SAID

"Expanding access to confidential taxpayer information to state agencies outside of the DOR would only serve to increase the risk of future breaches in confidentiality and could have a chilling effect on voluntary compliance...Treating tax returns as confidential documents and protecting taxpayer information is critical to the Commonwealth's voluntary tax system. Expanding broad access beyond the DOR would increase the risk of directly or indirectly exposing private taxpayer information and diminish trust in the system."

Coalition Letter to House Ways & Means Committee, 5/5/18

RESULT

This proposal did not become law in this legislative session.

IMMIGRATION

"The Roundtable believes in diversity, equity and fairness in the workplace."

"Massachusetts Business Roundtable members cite the state's workforce as its most important competitive advantage. This talent pipeline, combined with an ecosystem of diverse industries, diverse regions and diverse workplaces, contribute to making Massachusetts the most innovative state in the nation. The Roundtable believes in diversity, equity and fairness in the workplace. At the core of that principle are immigrants, working in every industry sector and living in every region of the Commonwealth. We embrace and support immigrants from all faiths, who are making Massachusetts a better place to live and work."

MBR Statement, 1/29/17

"Any attempt at immigration reform must recognize the valuable contributions that immigrants make to our nation, to the vibrancy of our economy and communities, and must adhere to the basic standards of human decency."

Joint Statement with the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, 6/20/18

Transportation Smarter Tolling

WHAT MBR SAID

"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" 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."

MBR Letter to Budget Conference Committee, 6/11/18

RESULT

This proposal did not become law in this legislative session.

Workforce Development

WHAT MBR SAID

"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.. We urge you to 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."

MBR Letter to Budget Conference Committee, 6/11/18

RESULT

\$5M appropriation for the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund; legislation also passed allowing 5% of the Workforce Training Fund to facilitate partnerships with employers to meet their talent pipeline training needs.

TRANSGENDER RIGHTS

"Discrimination isn't just wrong—it's bad for business too."

MBR is a member of the Coalition opposing repeal of the state's 2016 transgender rights law.

"Discrimination isn't just wrong—it's bad for business too. That's why Harvard Pilgrim, Google and Eastern Bank all strongly oppose the misguided effort to repeal Massachusetts' non-discrimination laws protecting our transgender friends, family and neighbors from discrimination. They understand that when communities are welcoming places for everyone to live, work and raise families, they succeed as well."

Freedom for All Massachusetts Website

We are proud to support the @Freedom_Mass coalition in this important effort. *MBR Tweet, 6/19/18*

We're here today at @easternbank with Freedom for All MA to support protecting transgender people from discrimination. *MBR Tweet, 7/31/18*