

# Framework for Long-Term Economic Prosperity in the Commonwealth

Competitiveness is not just a buzzword, it is an environment. It is a series of conditions that, if invested in properly, will lead to economic success and prosperity. At the Massachusetts Business Roundtable (MBR), we believe that as a fundamental premise to foster economic competitiveness, Massachusetts must invest in its competitive advantages and refocus on those areas of competitive disadvantage. In doing so, MBR believes the state's long-term economic vitality will be strengthened; innovation, investment and job creation will be encouraged; and Massachusetts will become a more highly-desirable place to do business.

## A More Competitive Commonwealth

- **Address High Costs and Complexity**
- **Invest in Three Priority Areas**
  - Education & Workforce Development
  - Transportation & Infrastructure
  - Health Care

When taken together, these principles form a framework for the long-term economic prosperity in Massachusetts.

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The Massachusetts Business Roundtable is a non-profit, non-partisan, statewide public policy organization comprised of chief executive officers and senior executives from some of the state's largest employers with more than 250,000 employees across the Commonwealth. The Roundtable's mission is to strengthen the state's economic vitality with the goal to make Massachusetts a highly-desirable place to do business. The Roundtable engages with leaders from industry, government and higher education to develop public policy solutions that improve the long-term health of the Massachusetts economy.

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# A More Competitive Commonwealth

## MBR Competitiveness Task Force

CHAIR **Barry Nearhos**

*Managing Partner*



Massachusetts enjoys some significant competitive advantages. Its workforce is among the most educated and talented in the country. Our health care system, both the quality of it and access to it, make it a destination for people from around the world and an important driver of our regional economy. We enjoy a quality of life that makes our state a destination for students, entrepreneurs, business people and innovators from all walks of life. With unemployment levels below the national average, diverse industry sectors growing here, a resurgence of advanced manufacturing and a vast talent pool to fuel our innovation-based economy, the state has enjoyed tremendous success in a challenging national climate.

Yet there are challenges. Massachusetts is an expensive place to do business, particularly in housing, energy, labor and health care. It can be a complex place to get things done, with a regulatory environment that continues to be an inhibitor to increased investment and job creation. While business models have changed dramatically due to innovation and technology, regulatory regimes have been slow to keep up or have unintended consequences on growth. When Massachusetts has policies and costs that are inconsistent with our competitors, it impacts both the perception and reality of Massachusetts as a place to do business.

In order to build upon our strengths, address our challenges, and set the conditions for long-term growth and prosperity, MBR's Competitiveness Task Force has identified the following principles to guide public policy:

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**Each region of the Commonwealth has unique economic needs and strengths that must be optimized, and shared with other regions, to provide widespread economic growth and prosperity.**

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### *Principle 1* **Support strengths, address weaknesses.**

As a general strategy for promoting economic competitiveness through public policy, Massachusetts should aggressively invest in its competitive advantages and reverse its disadvantages through collaborative efforts between the public and private sectors. Among the most prohibitive disadvantages are: costs, particularly in the areas of energy, housing, and health care; and complexity, the cumbersome and costly process of navigating a difficult regulatory environment and multiples layers of government.

### *Principle 2* **Recognize regional differences and strengths.**

Economic development policy must be inclusive of all regions of the state. Each region of the Commonwealth has unique economic needs and strengths that must be optimized, and shared with other regions, to provide widespread economic growth and prosperity.

### *Principle 3* **Job retention is as important as job creation.**

Just as important as recruiting companies and creating new jobs, the state should focus policy on ensuring that companies keep jobs in Massachusetts. Thoughtful job creation and retention strategies are essential to ensure economic opportunity throughout the Commonwealth.

*Principle 4* **Economic development is an ecosystem of a variety of employers.**

Small business and big business are closely linked through supply chain relationships, training efforts, and financing and mentoring support. Public policy must recognize that impacts felt in one link of the supply chain reverberate throughout the entire supply chain. It is important to not choose winners and losers.

*Principle 5* **Focus on talent.**

Cited by employers as Massachusetts' most important competitive advantage, the state should pursue both short- and long-term strategies to strengthen the talent pipeline and grow our population. Quality educational experiences, aligned with employer needs, provide the skilled workforce necessary for Massachusetts.

## Principles to Priorities: Components of the MBR Legislative Agenda

- ✓ **Energy Costs.** Massachusetts has amongst the highest energy costs in the country, putting the state at a disadvantage relative to its competitors and impacting businesses' investment decisions. MBR supports efforts to increase the supply of natural gas through increased pipeline capacity as a strategy to bring down costs.
- ✓ **Corporate Tax Policy.** MBR advocates for tax policy that is predictable, stable and competitive to promote investment and job creation and retention. In addition, tax policies must be aligned to support other important infrastructure investments, such as water and wastewater infrastructure upgrades and expansions as well as private investment in telecommunications and energy infrastructure.
- ✓ **Influencing Public Policy.** MBR will work with the new Governor's transition team and Administration, as well as the legislature, to advocate for MBR's principles in public policy during the 2015–2016 legislative session.
- ✓ **Gateway Cities.** MBR members recognize that in order for the Commonwealth to prosper, economic growth must expand to the entire state. MBR will engage with the Gateway Cities initiatives to provide focus and resources to improve opportunity in the state's Gateway Cities.
- ✓ **Non-Compete Clauses.** MBR supports current law, which allows for enforcement of non-competes to protect legitimate business interests.
- ✓ **Emergency Preparedness.** Businesses, large and small, must be prepared in the event of disasters that impact them and the communities they serve. MBR will join with FEMA and other business associations to explore opportunities to strengthen public policy and better prepare businesses—large and small, their employees and their communities for all types of emergencies and disasters.
- ✓ **Regulatory Reform.** Regulation must allow for innovation. Companies that are located here and invest here need to have a business and regulatory environment that allows them to flourish and innovate here.

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**PRIORITY AREA FOR INVESTMENT:**

# Education & Workforce Development

## **MBR Education & Workforce Development Task Force**

CHAIR **Marcy Reed**

*Massachusetts President*



Talent—the state’s highly educated workforce—is our top competitive advantage. Investing in education and workforce development must therefore be a top public policy priority. Business leaders recognize that there is a disconnect between the skills that students are graduating with and the skills employers need in hiring. In a survey of Massachusetts employers, 69 percent said they could not find workers with the skills necessary to fill open jobs. When asked what types of jobs were going unfilled, six in ten were identified as STEM jobs.

Employers report that they are looking for skilled workers, as well as well-rounded employees who can read, write and communicate effectively, who engage in civic life and who present themselves professionally. Therefore, investing in education and strengthening the workforce development system should be prioritized by policymakers.

MBR’s Education & Workforce Development Task Force adopted the following principles to guide these investments:

*Principle 1* **Increased partnerships between business and education are essential.**

The education and workforce development systems must be aligned with industry so that the workforce pipeline is producing workers skilled in the competencies in demand by employers today and into the future. Business has a responsibility to better communicate its needs to educators, to partner with schools, and to provide opportunities for students to experience the working world through models like cooperative education or internships. Similarly, educators have a responsibility to partner with business to ensure that students are well prepared and can more effectively access opportunities across the state. There are many outstanding partnerships being fostered throughout the Commonwealth. For example, companies are now working collaboratively with educational institutions to develop and implement specific curricula tied directly to new employment opportunities.

*Principle 2* **Ensure a robust STEM workforce pipeline.**

For the education and workforce development pipeline to produce enough workers skilled in STEM competencies to meet employer demands, multiple options must be available to provide students with inspiring, real-life experiences to enhance their education. These include the coordination of graduate and undergraduate education at four-year colleges and universities, programs at two-year colleges, and non-college pathways such as vocational and technical education. In addition, students should be exposed to mentors throughout their education so they can see and experience, from professionals, what they are learning about. These strategies are essential for all students, and are particularly effective in inspiring students and attracting underrepresented groups such as minorities and girls to STEM fields.

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*Principle* **3 Middle skill jobs must be a key component of the state's education agenda.**

Employers in a wide variety of industries—such as health care, manufacturing and construction—report difficulty in finding workers and craftspeople skilled in competencies necessary for middle skill employment. Industries that employ middle skill professionals are an important component of regional and statewide economic development. This is a particularly important and effective strategy for targeting economic growth in the state's Gateway Cities.

*Principle* **4 High-quality and effective teaching is critical for high-quality education.**

Teachers should be supported through competitive pay scales that attract and recognize top-notch talent and enable a relatively easy transition from other careers to teaching. There should also be ongoing incentives for high-level performance, as well as adequate access to mentoring and professional development opportunities.

*Principle* **5 Early childhood education provides the foundation for later learning and success.**

Children of all ages should be encouraged to develop a love of learning that includes a thirst for knowledge of all subjects. The most effective place to start is with the youngest children through high quality early education, particularly in developing and cultivating innate STEM competencies.

## Principles to Priorities: Components of the MBR Legislative Agenda

- ✓ **STEM.** Prioritize STEM education through the STEM Pipeline Fund and STEM Starter Academy, and leadership on the STEM Advisory Council; Support MassCAN initiative to make computer science available to all students in the Commonwealth.
- ✓ **Workforce Development.** Partner with the Workforce Solutions Group to promote the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund, Workforce Training Fund and the Hiring Incentive Training Grant Program; Better coordinate and align workforce development system; Advocate for middle skills opportunities in Gateway Cities.
- ✓ **Early Childhood.** Support early childhood education and advocate for important links between early childhood and STEM.

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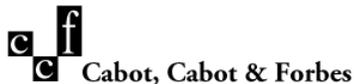
PRIORITY AREA FOR INVESTMENT:

# Transportation & Infrastructure

## MBR Transportation & Infrastructure Task Force

CHAIR **Jay Doherty**

*Chief Executive Officer*



Along with education, transportation infrastructure is cited by Roundtable members as a priority area for public policy investment. Our transportation infrastructure, essential for commerce and economic development—in the state, region, and globally—is in disrepair and in need of a plan to sustain it over the long term. The Roundtable has long supported increased investment in transportation infrastructure and a long-term transportation strategy, while at the same time insisting upon management improvements, greater performance measurement, and better use of technology, for example, as part of any effort to raise revenue.

The Transportation & Infrastructure Task Force has developed the following principles to guide the investment in the state's infrastructure:

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**Our transportation infrastructure, essential for commerce and economic development—in the state, region, and globally—is in disrepair and in need of a plan to sustain it over the long term.**

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*Principle 1* **Promote economic competitiveness.**

Revenue and investment decisions must be made to promote economic competitiveness and improve the perception of the Commonwealth as a place to do business, not harm them. A recent MBR report with the University of Massachusetts found that viable public transportation along with affordable housing inevitable results in higher rates of talent retention, a key element of long-term economic competitiveness.

*Principle 2* **Engage in sound, long-term planning.**

There needs to be a clearly articulated plan and vision for the investment of new revenues, with clear metrics and performance measures, particularly focused and prioritized on meaningful investments in transportation.

*Principle 3* **Pursue management reforms.**

Clear evidence of improvements at MassDOT—in the past and going forward—is imperative, including effective resource management, greater performance measurement, efficient service delivery, better use of technology and increased transparency throughout the agency.

*Principle 4* **Prioritize maintenance over expansion.**

Priority should be given to the maintenance and improvement of existing transportation infrastructure in the near term.

*Principle 5* **Ensure regional equity.**

Any investment of new revenue must be dedicated solely for transportation purposes and distributed equitably across the Commonwealth.

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## Principles to Priorities: Components of the MBR Legislative Agenda

- ✓ **Water Infrastructure.** Address funding for replacement and expansions of water and wastewater infrastructure.
- ✓ **Monitoring Reforms.** Monitor implementation of transportation finance legislation, including continued implementation of performance management and other reforms at the Massachusetts Department of Transportation such as the utilization of innovative procurement and contracting methods that help complete projects on time and on budget.
- ✓ **Adequate Investment.** Continue to advocate for adequate funding for the state's transportation infrastructure to ensure economic growth throughout the Commonwealth. According to the Federal Highway Administration, there are 487 structurally deficient bridges and 27 bridges that are closed in Massachusetts. Business leaders have clearly articulated the importance of investing in our roads, bridges, mass transit and other forms infrastructure to support economic expansion across the state.

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**PRIORITY AREA FOR INVESTMENT:**

# Health Care

## **MBR Health Care Task Force**

CHAIR **Matthew Gattuso**  
*President, Health Systems*



Health care in Massachusetts is one of the state’s great competitive advantages. The Commonwealth is home to some of the most highly rated health care providers and health plans in the country; it has near universal access for its citizens to the health care system; and it enjoys a generally healthy population. However, the high cost of health care in Massachusetts is a competitive disadvantage, and both premiums and health care spending are growing at unsustainable rates for a large number of employers.

The Massachusetts Business Roundtable believes that as payment reform is implemented, all stakeholders should be guided by the following set of principles:

*Principle 1* **Improve health outcomes without driving up costs.**

This fundamental principle embodies the promise of payment reform. Public policy decisions made during implementation must not result in net, year over year growth in health insurance premiums for employers, individuals or their families, or increases in statewide total health care spending beyond the cap established in the law, and must improve the quality of patient care.

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**Improve health outcomes without driving up costs. This fundamental principle embodies the promise of payment reform.**

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*Principle 2* **Promote competition.**

Competition is a basic business principle that results in lower costs for the consumer. Any consolidation in the health care marketplace must result in greater value—highest quality care, in the most coordinated, cost efficient manner—for all stakeholders in the system: insurers, providers, purchasers and consumers.

*Principle 3* **Encourage transparency.**

Implementation of payment reform will result in large-scale impacts on every stakeholder in the health care system. These impacts must be readily and publicly available, and health care stakeholders must provide useful information, so that decisions are made based upon actionable data with a full understanding of how they may impact the care and cost a consumer chooses. Employers also need transparency in order to understand how these decisions are impacting their health insurance premiums.

*Principle 4* **Leverage public payers’ purchasing power.**

With a significant number of covered lives and economic scale, public payers (including Medicaid, Medicare, GIC and the Health Connector) must take a leadership role in the implementation of payment reform. Public payers must leverage their purchasing power in order to move payment reform forward in the public market, in the same way the commercial market has done. In addition, reimbursements by the government that do not adequately cover the costs of health care services must be improved.

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*Principle* **5 Mitigate the cost of implementation to the system.**

The cost of implementation of state and federal health care laws, through administrative and IT requirements, is saddling the health care system with additional costs that threaten the goal of cost containment. The state and federal governments must be mindful of this and mitigate implementation costs to the system wherever possible by proposing and adopting carefully drafted regulations and interpretative guidance that reduce complexity, compliance costs and burdens whenever possible.

*Principle* **6 Integrate wellness and health management.**

One of the most effective strategies for addressing health care costs is promotion of healthy behavior and prevention. Private employers are making significant investments in their wellness programs and providing additional benefits to employees to help them manage their health. Many of these successful private sector health management models can serve as a catalyst for change in public policy.

## **Principles to Priorities: Components of the MBR Legislative Agenda**

- ✓ **Payment Reform.** Continue to urge state government to use its purchasing power to make payment reform within the Medicaid program an immediate priority in order to lower the cost of health insurance premiums for individuals and employers in Massachusetts.
- ✓ **Medicaid Reform.** Advocate for improved transparency in the Medicaid payment system to ensure efficiency and reduce cost shifting to private payers that results in higher premiums for employers.

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# Summary of MBR Public Policy Priorities

## ✓ **Engage in Transition Activities.**

Work with the new Governor's transition team and Administration, as well as the legislature, to advocate for MBR's principles in public policy.

## ✓ **Energy Costs.**

Support efforts to increase the supply of natural gas through increased pipeline capacity as a strategy to bring down costs.

## ✓ **Gateway Cities.**

Develop priorities and engage with the Gateway Cities initiative to provide focus and resources to improve opportunity in the state's Gateway Cities.

## ✓ **Emergency Preparedness.**

Join with FEMA and other business associations to prepare a report that explores opportunities to strengthen public policy and better prepare businesses—large and small, their employees and their communities for all types of emergencies and disasters.

## ✓ **STEM.**

Prioritize STEM education through the STEM Pipeline Fund and STEM Starter Academy, and leadership on the STEM Advisory Council; and Support MassCAN initiative to make computer science available to all students in the Commonwealth.

## ✓ **Workforce Development.**

Partner with the Workforce Solutions Group to promote the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund, Workforce Training Fund and the Hiring Incentive Training Grant Program; and Advocate for middle skills opportunities in Gateway Cities.

## ✓ **Early Childhood.**

Support early childhood education and advocate for important links between early childhood and STEM.

## ✓ **Adequate Investment in Infrastructure.**

Continue to advocate for adequate funding for the state's infrastructure to ensure economic growth in every region of the Commonwealth.

## ✓ **Medicaid Reform.**

Advocate for improved transparency in the Medicaid payment system to ensure efficiency and reduce cost shifting to private payers that results in higher premiums for employers.

## ✓ **Payment Reform.**

Continue to urge state government to use its purchasing power to make payment reform within the Medicaid program an immediate priority in order to lower the cost of health insurance premiums for individuals and employers in Massachusetts.

## ✓ **Regulatory Reform.**

Regulation must allow for innovation. Companies that are located here and invest here need to have a business and regulatory environment that allows them to flourish and innovate here.

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# Principles in Action

## *Prior Examples of Turning Principles into Public Policy Impact*

### A More Competitive Commonwealth

- **Support strengths, address weaknesses.**

This principle was adopted by MBR's Competitiveness Task Force as a fundamental premise for promoting economic competitiveness through public policy and was the foundation for MBR's Competitiveness Agenda. This was shared with Governor Patrick's Administration as they were developing an economic development plan for the Commonwealth. The plan, "Choosing to Compete in the 21st Century," includes this principle, citing a strategy that "...continues the approach of both building on our great strengths and candidly addressing our on-going challenges."

- **Economic development is an ecosystem of a variety of employers.**

MBR asked a team from the Emerging Leaders Program (ELP) at the University of Massachusetts-Boston to survey a handful of large Massachusetts employers to evaluate the relationships between large and small businesses in the Commonwealth. The team, through an informal survey of large employers from a variety of industries, found that a typical large employer in Massachusetts does business with hundreds and sometimes thousands of small business suppliers, individually spending hundreds of millions of dollars on that supply chain; concluding that "Impacts felt in one link of the supply chain reverberate throughout the entire supply chain."

This was conveyed in a variety of settings, including during deliberations on increasing the minimum wage and eliminating non-compete agreements. It was also shared with Boston Mayor Marty Walsh's transition team on economic development.

#### **PRIORITY AREA FOR INVESTMENT:**

### Education & Workforce Development

- **Increased partnerships between business and education are essential.**

Through a partnership with the Workforce Solutions Group, the Roundtable advocated for the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund, which has a strong track record of awarding competitive grants to support regional training initiatives that mandate inclusion of local employers. "An Act Promoting Economic Growth Across the Commonwealth," signed into law on August 13, 2014, provides \$2.5 million in funding for the Fund.

- **Ensure a robust STEM workforce pipeline.**

MBR convened and led a coalition that prompted the creation of the Governor's STEM Advisory Council by Executive Order. Recognizing the need to continue the work of the Council beyond the Patrick Administration, MBR strongly advocated for the codification of the Council into state law. The FY15 State budget codifies the STEM Advisory Council into law and provides \$1.5 million in funding. The Roundtable was specifically named in the legislation as a member of the Council.

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PRIORITY AREA FOR INVESTMENT:

## Transportation & Infrastructure

- **Promote economic competitiveness.**

MBR helped to make the case for additional investments in transportation infrastructure as an essential component for economic competitiveness. This advocacy helped lead to the passage of transportation finance legislation in 2013.

- **Pursue management reforms.**

MBR collaborated with the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation on a report making recommendations to ensure the greatest possible return on additional investments in transportation that are required to enhance the state's economic competitiveness. The report delivered a "performance blueprint" for Massachusetts transportation agencies and spotlights opportunities for better use of technology and implementation of continued efficiencies at MassDOT. Most of the reform recommendations in the report were eventually adopted.

PRIORITY AREA FOR INVESTMENT:

## Health Care

- **Leverage public payers' purchasing power.**

MBR joined other business groups in urging the Patrick Administration "to make payment reform within the Medicaid program an immediate priority in order to lower the cost of health insurance premiums for individuals and employers in Massachusetts." The group sent a letter to Governor Patrick expressing concern regarding the status of payment reform in the Massachusetts Medicaid program and the low reimbursement rates that have led to major cost shifts to the private sector and higher premiums for small businesses and their employees. Highlighting the Governor's leadership on payment reform through Chapter 224, the letter calls on the Administration to use the waiver agreement with the federal government to make payment reform in Medicaid a top priority.

- **Integrate wellness and health management.**

MBR released a report confirming that employers of all sizes are proactively managing rising health care costs through a strong commitment to wellness and health management programs. This was shared with the Legislature during its deliberations over landmark health care cost containment legislation. The Roundtable successfully pushed for the creation of a new Model Wellness Guide in that law, which will help to translate the best practices of private sector wellness programs to the public sector and expand efforts on wellness and prevention as cost reduction strategies.

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