



Joint Committee on Economic Development and Emerging Technologies
Hearing on H.4559 - An Act relative to strengthening Massachusetts' economic
leadership (Mass Leads)

May 7, 2024

The State House - Room A1 and A2

Chairman Finegold, Chairman Parisella, and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide comments on H.4559, An Act relative to strengthening Massachusetts' economic leadership, also known as the Mass Leads Act.

The Roundtable is an organization of more than 90 CEOs and Senior Executives from large employers across the Commonwealth with the mission of strengthening the state's long-term economic vitality and competitiveness by making Massachusetts a highly desirable place to live, work, and do business. Much of that work is done in partnership with public leaders and this Committee and we are grateful for your leadership.

Our mission, your work, and our mutual collaboration is more crucial now than ever. Massachusetts' high cost of living, high cost of doing business, and the related outmigration trends exacerbated by increased mobility resulting from the pandemic, are posing a direct threat to our economy. In an annual survey of Roundtable members, which will be released in a couple of weeks, we are noticing warning signs: the number of employers citing costs as a critical factor in their decision to remain in Massachusetts has more than doubled over the last two years and an increasing number are planning to grow their workforce outside of the state. For an economy historically based on access to the best talent in the world, this is a direct threat to the state's competitiveness and cause for urgency to pass H.4559 this session.

These economic conditions were the primary driver for the Roundtable's participation on the state's Economic Development Planning Council, which developed a report that led to H.4559. As such, we are supportive of the legislation with some specific priorities in four categories:

- **Reauthorizing Existing Programs:** For Massachusetts to succeed, there must be a strong foundation to support economic growth. The Roundtable supports capital investments and policy changes aimed to support proven programs

statewide, including life sciences 3.0 reauthorization; local economic development initiatives; broadband expansion and procurement fixes; and targeted permitting reforms under EOED.

- **New Initiatives:** Massachusetts should strive to be a global leader in high growth industries that will position the state as an attractive, innovative hub for talent and business. This includes ensuring the Commonwealth continues to invest in its chief competitive advantage, its people, through initiatives like the statewide internship tax credit pilot program, reforms to the Workforce Investment Trust Fund, and efforts to grow the climatetech industry in Massachusetts.

The Workforce Investment Trust Fund was created as part of the sports wagering law to “develop and strengthen workforce opportunities for low-income communities and vulnerable youth and young adults in the commonwealth, including providing opportunities and strategies to promote stable employment and wage growth.” H.4459 would expand the allowable uses of funding to include “English language learning programs to promote access to the workforce; or facilitate work permits, professional credentialing, or other workforce opportunities for non-citizens permanently residing under color of law or otherwise lawfully present in the commonwealth.” This could address many of the barriers that foreign-educated immigrants face as identified in the Roundtable’s report, [Tapping Untapped Talent: How Foreign-Educated Immigrants Can Strengthen the Massachusetts Economy](#).

Additionally, during the Economic Development Planning Council Process, the Roundtable helped lead the Climate Working Group which supported the recommendations to invest in climatetech, an initiative in H.4559 that has the Roundtable’s full support. Climatetech is a promising and generational opportunity for Massachusetts to lead the nation and globe by marshaling our historic strengths and unique ecosystem to not only develop cutting edge solutions to climate change but create a statewide economic and workforce development engine. H.4559 provides a bold and comprehensive vision for the climatetech industry that the Roundtable strongly endorses.

- **Statewide Reach:** The state must ensure statewide impact of its economic development initiatives. The Roundtable supports intentional and targeted investments in various sectors to ensure regional equity and growth such as Applied AI Hubs and Advanced Manufacturing through Mass Tech Collaborative, as well as inclusion of the Permit Extension Act to ensure that already permitted projects across the state come to fruition.
- **Data and Measurement:** The economic development investments and policy proposals in Mass Leads must be targeted and have an impact on the entire

Commonwealth. It will be vital that the state measure key data points and launch a public-facing dashboard to track indicators including: regional economic growth, workforce and demographic trends, growth and jobs in the climatetech and life sciences sectors, and more.

The Roundtable stands ready to be a resource to the Committee as you consider this legislation, and we thank you for your leadership.