



August 3, 2021

Chair Peisch, Chair Lewis, Members of the Joint Committee on Education:

As we emerge from the pandemic, the need for robust pathways to economic opportunity is urgent. Students and businesses alike are demanding access to the skills needed for success in our dynamic economy. A recent report from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) [found that 44 out of 58 career-technical education \(CTE\) schools surveyed had a waitlist](#). Statewide, demand among rising 9th graders for spots in CTE schools is [1.5 times the number of places available](#), and that [demand is growing](#). Expansion of CTE school capacity is necessary. We must also strengthen and better integrate other career-connected learning pathways if we are to flexibly meet student needs and remain responsive to shifting economic opportunities.

We therefore support the intent of 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, 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, and H.699, *An Act relative to vocational education*, filed by Representative Adam Scanlon.

These bills seek to meet the challenges of the moment by promoting expansion of access to CTE and other forms career-connected learning. We support the goal of a robust CTE system that provides multiple, flexible pathways for all students. We encourage the committee to explore incorporating the strategies advanced by these bills as part of a holistic approach to meeting student demand for high quality career-aligned learning opportunities.

With respect to H.653/S.357 and H.666/S.348, we encourage consideration of the proposal to create an Office of Career Technical Education within DESE to strengthen, coordinate, and expand CTE. This office's proposed focus on promoting greater use of CTE schools' equipment and facilities outside of regular school hours and expanding access to high-demand industry-recognized credentials, among other responsibilities, is necessary. We think that these bills take the right approach to important CTE governance issues by empowering the new office to set specific rules and strategies in consultation with the entities – businesses, education providers, and others – most closely working on them. These systems-level issues include promoting partnership between high schools with vocational programs and those that do not have them, identifying and certifying attainment of durable skills valued by employers, and promoting coordination with industry-recognized credentials providers and institutions of higher education. We also support further study of options for clarifying and simplifying CTE funding mechanisms, as required by these bills.

In H.699, we support consideration of enabling traditional high schools to offer Chapter 74 vocational programs as a means to expand student access to high quality and labor-market-aligned CTE programs, particularly but not exclusively for those students unable to enroll in CTE schools due to oversubscription.

The pandemic has disrupted education and caused major economic shifts. As we begin to recover, we have a unique opportunity to better enable our education system to deliver the skills needed for a sustained economic rebound. The committee's consideration of these ambitious bills is well timed. We look forward to continuing to work with you to pass legislation that will expand and align career-connected learning pathways.

Sincerely,

Associated Industries of Massachusetts
Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce
Cape Cod Canal Region Chamber of Commerce
Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce
Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts
Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce
Greater Holyoke Chamber of Commerce
Lynn Regional Chamber of Commerce
Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education
Massachusetts High Technology Council
MassTLC

Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation
NAIOP Massachusetts
Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce
Neponset River Regional Chamber
North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce
One SouthCoast Chamber
Retailers Association of Massachusetts
Springfield Business Leaders for Education
Springfield Regional Chamber
Taunton Area Chamber of Commerce
Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce

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