



August 11, 2020

Senator Eric Lesser, Chair, Committee on Economic Development & Emerging Technologies  
Senator Michael Rodrigues, Chair, Senate Committee on Ways & Means  
Senator Patrick O'Connor, Ranking Minority Member, Senate Committee on Ways & Means  
Representative Aaron Michlewitz, Chair, House Committee on Ways and Means  
Representative Ann-Margaret Ferrante, Chair, Committee on Economic Development & Emerging Technologies  
Representative Donald Wong, Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Economic Development & Emerging Technologies

Dear Conferees:

I am writing in regard to S.2874 and H.4887, *An Act Enabling Partnerships for Growth*, and to respectfully convey some priorities on behalf of the Massachusetts Business Roundtable. The Roundtable is grateful to both the House and Senate for focusing on economic growth and recovery during these unprecedented economic times.

The Roundtable is a non-profit, non-partisan public policy organization comprised of CEOs and Senior Executives from the state's largest employers that collectively employ more than 250,000 people in diverse industry sectors across the state. Our mission is to strengthen the state's long-term economic vitality with the goal of making Massachusetts a highly desirable place to do business in the global economy. Following are some priorities from the legislation before you that we would like to highlight as you continue your deliberations:

**Workforce Development:** As a member of the Workforce Solutions Group (WSG), the Roundtable supports its efforts to close racial, opportunity and geographic inequity gaps. In response to the pandemic-induced high unemployment rate, there is an urgent need for re-skilling and upskilling to help workers whose jobs are not coming back in the foreseeable future, as well as for mental health supports for those who lose their jobs and ESOL programs to assist those who are being disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. The Roundtable *supports the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund*, which supports career pathways aligned with job training, economic development, and higher education systems to help workers at all skill levels find jobs. We also *support capital grant funding for vocational technical schools*, a long-time priority of the Roundtable.

**Housing:** The Roundtable sees housing as an essential component of a comprehensive and integrated economic development strategy and *supports the Housing Choice Initiative* in H.4887 as part of an effort to meet the overwhelming demand of the Commonwealth's increasing housing needs. In order to maximize economic growth and increase talent retention, the Commonwealth must continue to develop and enhance public policies to improve access to affordable housing.

**Supporting Women and Minority Owned Business:** The Roundtable *supports the grant program through Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation (MGCC)* for micro-businesses and minority entrepreneurs to provide capital for starting or expanding a business. We also support efforts to expand the state's manufacturing pipeline through expansion of the Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative. Going forward, public policy should continue to reflect that investing in technology and supporting minority owned businesses will increase Massachusetts' competitiveness in key industries.

**Child Care:** The Covid-19 pandemic has made it abundantly clear that high quality childcare is an essential enabler of the Massachusetts economy. It also has laid bare the fragile and unsustainable business model experienced by childcare providers. With many providers shuttered across the Commonwealth, workers have been left with less accessible choices for high-quality care. The impact of this destabilization has had – and will continue to have – a disproportionate impact on women, particularly women of color. Therefore, the Roundtable strongly believes that a successful workforce development strategy should focus on stabilizing the early education and care system while developing career pathways for providers, setting a strong talent pipeline and also providing support to our employers. We therefore *support the House proposal to create a special commission to examine and make recommendations relative to the economic impact of early education and care programming in the commonwealth.*

Two final thoughts: first, given the impact that Covid-19 has had on the state's economy, the Roundtable has been working closely with the national Business Roundtable and colleagues from around the country urging Congress to provide assistance to state and local governments. We recently joined with 15 other states, collectively representing 9,300 major employers with a workforce of more than 5.3 million, to urge Congressional leaders to “include significant aid for state and local governments so that they can continue to safely reopen their economies while continuing to respond to the pandemic.” We will continue that advocacy.

Second, the forced experiment of remote work is working better than anticipated. Most Roundtable member companies – which have the capacity to offer work from home to their employees – plan to continue a work-from-home model at least through the end of the year, and many have suggested that even post-pandemic, a significant number of employees will continue to work remotely. While not all employers can operate in this manner, there will be significant impact on public policy as new supports must be created for employees working from home to make it sustainable. As such, it is imperative that the Commonwealth's public policy agenda reflects this systemic shift and continues to prioritize Massachusetts' competitive position within the global economy. Many of the provisions in the legislation before you reflect that new reality and we are grateful for your efforts in addressing it.

We appreciate the chance to share these priorities and would be happy to discuss them further.

Thank you for your continued leadership.

Sincerely,



JD Chesloff  
Executive Director