

MBR

MASSACHUSETTS BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE



March 17, 2008

Senator Mark C. Montigny, Chair
Representative David L. Flynn, Chair
Joint Committee on Bonding, Capital Expenditures and State Assets
The State House
Boston, MA 02133

Chairman Montigny, Chairman Flynn, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Massachusetts Business Roundtable and Associated Industries of Massachusetts, we are writing in support of H.4538 (the new draft of H.4280), a bill “providing for the public higher education capital improvement needs of the Commonwealth.”

When current and prospective Massachusetts employers look at workforce trends, there are two worrisome statistics: first, there are currently 90,000 job vacancies in the state due in part to a workforce whose training does not match employment opportunities; and second, according to the Center for Labor Studies at Northeastern University, the overall size of the “prime-age” working population – those aged 25 to 54 – will fall by more than 100,000 between 2005 and 2015. For Massachusetts to compete in an increasingly global economy, we need to have a higher percentage of well trained, well educated workers to fill those job vacancies that are critical to the Commonwealth’s innovation economy in the future. Otherwise, we are concerned that those jobs will go elsewhere.

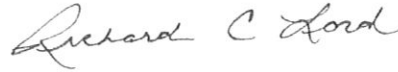
Massachusetts relies on its public higher education system to meet that need. While we are blessed with some of the finest private colleges and universities in the world, two out of every three Massachusetts high school graduates who stay in state to attend college are in our public higher education system. Furthermore, the graduates of public higher education stay in the state in much larger numbers. As employers look to fill today’s jobs and ensure a pipeline of workers for the future, it is imperative that our public higher education institutions have the tools necessary to prepare students for those opportunities.

Massachusetts currently faces a backlog of \$5.5 billion in unfunded capital projects in public higher education. Without increased investment, we will fall further behind our national and global competitors. H.4538 is a step toward correcting this deficit, by making a significant investment in the state's 29 public colleges and universities to meet today's education needs. For these reasons, we urge favorable action on this bonding legislation.

Sincerely,



Alan G. Macdonald
Executive Director
Massachusetts Business Roundtable



Richard C. Lord
President & CEO
Associated Industries of Massachusetts

cc:

Senator Therese Murray, President of the Senate
Representative Salvatore F. DiMasi, Speaker of the House of Representatives
Senator Steven C. Panagiotakos, Chair, Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Representative Robert A. DeLeo, Chair, House Committee on Ways and Means