



# 2025 Mid-Year HIGHLIGHTS

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

The first seven months of 2025 have brought much uncertainty.

With tariffs, shifting federal policies, and costs being top of mind for employers, Roundtable members continue to seek opportunities to collaborate with the government and each other to move Massachusetts forward.

If there's ever been a time for the business community to stand up and work with the public sector to protect and grow the Massachusetts economy, it is now. As one Roundtable member said earlier this year, this is the opportunity to "reset the working relationship between companies and the state, so that each side contributes to problem solving together." Guided by input from our members, the Roundtable stands ready to do just that.

Thank you to our members who continue to offer feedback and ideas to guide the Roundtable's work. We hope that you enjoy this Mid-Year Highlight report, which summarizes many of the activities the team has been up to in the first half of 2025.

JD CHESLOFF

## POLICY ADVOCACY FOCUSED ON THE TALENT AGENDA

With the Roundtable's revamped [Talent Agenda](#) as a framework, our policy priorities continue to be focused on: (1) attracting and retaining talent; (2) developing untapped and diverse talent; and (3) creating a competitive environment for growth. As the new legislative session began, we submitted testimony and engaged on the following key issues:



JD Chesloff, Roundtable Board Chair Lisa Murray, and Québec Minister Christopher Skeete at the Roundtable's June Board Meeting.

» **H.1, An Act making appropriations for FY2026:**

The Roundtable testified at a Joint Ways and Means Committee education hearing supporting investments in key Roundtable priorities such as early childhood education, early college, STEM, career and technical education, and community colleges.. [READ THE TESTIMONY.](#)

» **H.2080/S.1326, An Act to promote economic mobility through ESOL:** The Roundtable submitted testimony in support of increased investment and coordinated statewide strategies for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs, one of the Roundtable's top issues for this legislative session. [READ THE TESTIMONY.](#)

» **H.78/S.45, An Act establishing the Massachusetts Data Privacy Act:** The Roundtable submitted testimony opposing various bills intended to create a Massachusetts Data Privacy Act, which would adversely impact the state's competitiveness. [READ THE TESTIMONY.](#)

» **H.54, An Act to build resilient infrastructure to generate higher-ed transformation:** The Roundtable submitted testimony in support of \$2.5B in new capital resources for public higher education institutions statewide to modernize campuses and facilities, accommodate student demand, and support economic and workforce development. [READ THE TESTIMONY.](#)

» **H.4144, An Act relative to energy affordability, independence, and innovation:** The Roundtable submitted testimony in support of "energy-ready" economic development zones designed to promote business attraction and expansion. [READ THE TESTIMONY.](#)

# PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS TO ADVANCE COMPETITIVENESS

A key takeaway from our 5th Annual Talent and Competitiveness Survey, released in June 2025, is that 75% of employers are interested in collaborating—with other businesses or the state—especially in areas such as AI, workforce development, and education-to-employment pipelines.

The Roundtable remains focused on finding new partners, ensuring that a constant and collaborative voice is at the table with state government to make Massachusetts a better place to live, work, and do business. Examples of this work in 2025 include:

75% of employers are interested in collaboration

## AI Hub Education and Workforce Workgroup

Earlier this year, the Healey-Driscoll Administration created the Massachusetts **AI Hub**, led by Roundtable member organization **Massachusetts Technology Collaborative**. The Roundtable, represented by EVP Tonja Mettlach, has been serving on the Education and Workforce Workgroup, which is focused on providing guidance and support for activities addressing human needs in the emergence of AI in the Commonwealth's technology and innovation ecosystem. AI has emerged as a top priority for Roundtable members.



Roundtable member Rebecca Chasen, JD Chesloff, Board Chair Lisa Murray, Secretary Lauren Jones, and Secretary Pat Tutwiler at the Roundtable's March Board Meeting.

## Shared Agenda on Competitiveness

The Roundtable joined with colleagues from the **Associated Industries of Massachusetts**, **Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce**, and **Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation** to send a letter to leaders in the Healey-Driscoll Administration and Legislature, offering to work collaboratively on four areas of focus for the new session that are critical to continuing to address the state's competitiveness: (1) growing and maximizing the state's labor force; (2) supporting core economic sectors; (3) viewing policy through the prism of cost; and (4) maintaining strong public finances. [Read the letter.](#)

Additional commissions and boards the Roundtable serve on include:

- BCBSMA Foundation Health Care System Access and Planning Study Advisory Group
- ESOL Expansion
- Early Education Legislative Data Advisory Commission
- MassSkills Coalition
- MassHire State Workforce Board
- One Massachusetts/Our Commonwealth

## MCAS COMMISSION

In January, Governor Healey signed an Executive Order establishing a **Massachusetts K-12 Statewide Graduation Council**. This Council is tasked with making recommendations on "how Massachusetts can ensure that all students graduate with the skills necessary to succeed in college, careers, and civic life, regardless of their background or location, and demonstrate these qualities through a consistent statewide set of expectations." The Roundtable, represented by President & CEO, JD Chesloff, has been serving on the Council. This important work is aligned with the Roundtable's Talent Agenda and is designed to ensure the business community's voice is at the table as the state determines what its graduation requirement will look like post-MCAS.

# MEMBER-DRIVEN PRIORITIES

## Fifth Annual Talent & Competitiveness Survey—Finding Opportunity in Times of Uncertainty

This spring, the Roundtable, in collaboration with **McKinsey & Co.**, surveyed and interviewed members to gain the latest insights on talent and economic competitiveness issues. In short, the survey found growing concern about the Commonwealth's ability to stay competitive—with many citing rising costs, talent challenges, and national uncertainty as key barriers to growth. Despite these headwinds, employers

also point to opportunities both to lead nationally in AI and innovation; and to foster new partnerships and alliances aimed to generate novel ideas and think innovatively and differently about solving problems. [Read the 5th Annual Survey.](#)

Media coverage included: [The Boston Globe](#), [Boston Business Journal](#), a [webinar](#) conducted in partnership with the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, and an OpEd by JD Chesloff and Roundtable Board Chair Lisa Murray in [CommonWealth Beacon](#).



### MA Talent and Competitiveness Survey 2025: Finding Opportunity in Uncertain Times

#### KEY FINDINGS

- ✓ The state's competitiveness faces challenges, primarily due to cost of housing, cost of doing business, and quality of infrastructure.
- ✓ Federal policy uncertainty is delaying investment, hiring, and decisions.
- ✓ Talent-friendly policies and AI deployment are core solutions companies are implementing or considering to address challenges and boost productivity in Massachusetts.
- ✓ Massachusetts has an opportunity, both in AI and by encouraging new partnerships, to navigate and strengthen talent and competitiveness.



## STAY ENGAGED!

Would you or your company like to engage in initiatives to support education and workforce development pathways that bring value back to your business? Ask the Roundtable for more information about:



Join a growing network of stakeholders dedicated to advancing pathways to college for high school students through Early College programming. Employer feedback and partnership is valuable!

### Massachusetts Apprenticeship Network

Connect with employers with experience and best practices to help your business create, implement, scale, and promote apprenticeship models that work best for your company. You may also be eligible for state funding!



Join **MassSkills** for engaging virtual learning communities on proven strategies for skills-first hiring, upward mobility, and data & measurement. Launched by Governor Healey in 2024, MassSkills brings Massachusetts employers together, from every sector across the state, who are committed to sharing, learning, reimagining, and implementing new ways to access, hire, train, upskill, and retain talent.



# MEMBER-DRIVEN PRIORITIES

## Building Connections—Open Forums/Board Meetings

Part of the value of membership at the Roundtable are forums that bring together members, state leaders, and other stakeholders on timely topics of importance to the business community. Thank you to all the guest speakers who joined the Roundtable so far in 2025 during monthly Open Forums and Board meetings:

- Secretary of Education, **Pat Tutwiler**
- Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development, **Lauren Jones**
- **Representative Aaron Michlewitz**, House Chairman of the Ways & Means Committee
- **Molly Jacobson**, President & CEO, Commonwealth Corporation
- **Christopher Skeete**, Québec's Minister of the Economy and Minister Responsible for the Fight Against Racism
- **Mark Williams**, Master Lecturer, Boston University's Questrom School of Business
- **Edward Rios**, Partner, BAL
- **Lucy Pérez**, Senior Partner, McKinsey

## Monitor Impact of Federal Policy Changes

Roundtable members continue to cite federal uncertainty and shifting funding and policies as top of mind issues. As an organization mainly focused on state issues, we have spent the first half of 2025 convening members with each other and state leaders to discuss top of mind concerns at the federal level. This has included:

- **Member Bi-weekly Zooms** to discuss important issues such as tariffs, immigration, DE&I, and more.
- Tariff conversation with the **Healey-Driscoll Administration**.
- Monthly convenings of state roundtable organizations from around the country.
- Virtual briefing with **U.S. Secretary of Energy, Chris Wright**.

## SUMMER MEETINGS

Now in its 15th year, the Roundtable has kicked off a three-month process where staff meets one-on-one with members to solicit feedback on two questions: (1) what is the latest in your company, industry, and the Massachusetts economy; and (2) how can we continue to provide value to our members. These conversations inform and refresh our member-driven policy agenda while also ensuring our programming and events reflect the interests and priorities of members. In September, look for a summary of the themes and trends learned.

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS



Questrom School of Business



BRIDGEWATER  
STATE UNIVERSITY

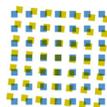


Dana-Farber  
Cancer Institute

Johnson & Johnson



Specialty  
MINERALS



sustainserv



WAYMO

