



November 10, 2021

Senator Karen Spilka, President
Massachusetts Senate
State House, Room 332
Boston, MA 02133

Senator Michael Rodrigues, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
State House, Room 212
Boston, MA 02133

Dear President Spilka and Chairman Rodrigues,

I am writing to share the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce's position on proposed amendments to the Senate's ARPA funding bill *S.2564, An Act relative to immediate COVID-19 recovery needs*.

SUPPORT Amendment #1 and Amendment #2: UI Trust Fund

The Chamber supports increasing funding for the Unemployment Compensation Fund to at least \$1 billion. Businesses in every corner of the Commonwealth face UI tax increases to pay down the \$7 billion deficit in the Unemployment Compensation Fund. The deficit is the result of massive economic shutdowns required during the pandemic, and employers are now shouldering that burden alone. We urge you to adopt this amendment and increase the Commonwealth's contribution to the fund to \$1 billion and to mitigate the burden on employers, particularly small businesses.

SUPPORT Amendment #82: Hospitality and Tourism Funding

The Chamber supports \$30 million in funding for the hospitality and tourism industries because these industries are essential to the Massachusetts economy. The pandemic underscored just how many residents are employed in hospitality and tourism jobs; workers in the hospitality and tourism industry accounted for one in five unemployment insurance claims during the first year of the pandemic.¹ This funding will help to restore employment for these industries by promoting the industry to out-of-state travelers, many of whom could not visit Massachusetts during the pandemic. We urge you to provide this direct support to the tourism and hospitality industries.

OPPOSE Amendment #159: Unemployment Overpayment Waivers

The Chamber opposes this amendment. The costs of waivers will impact employers, including small businesses, who are already shouldering a \$7 billion burden for the costs of unemployment benefits provided during the pandemic. Overpayments are not the result of employer errors, so if overpayments will be waived the state should subsidize the costs of those errors by increasing funding for the Unemployment Compensation Fund to an amount at least equal to the cost of overpayments.

On behalf of our 1,300 members, thank you for your consideration of the Chamber's positions. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'James E. Rooney'.

James E. Rooney
President & CEO
Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce

CC: Members of the Senate

¹ Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce calculation based on Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development data. The hospitality and tourism industry includes the Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation industry (NAICS 71) and the Accommodation and Food Services industry (NAICS 72).