

June 12, 2023

Representative Denise Garlick, House Chair  
Joint Committee on Education  
State House, Room 473G  
Boston, MA 02133

Senator Jason Lewis, Senate Chair  
Joint Committee on Education  
State House, Room 511-B  
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chair Garlick and Chair Lewis,

On behalf of the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce and our 1,200 members, I write to support legislation aimed at growing and enhancing career/vocational technical education (CVTE) in the Commonwealth. Our members consistently provide us with a stark message: they need skilled workers. This need is not concentrated in one or two industries; it is widespread across the economy. CVTE helps close skills gaps to the benefit of employers and students – the state's future employees.

The Chamber supports **H.531, An Act to increase student access to career technical education schools and programs which are aligned with regional labor market needs**. The bill proposes a new Office of Career Technical Education within the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) dedicated to improving skills development through CVTE and that is charged with promoting capacity expansion demonstration programs where students split time between their comprehensive high school and a school offering Chapter 74 programs. As the Commonwealth fights to retain talent here in the state, it is incumbent upon the state to re-prioritize technical education that provides vital experiential learning for those looking to grow their career.

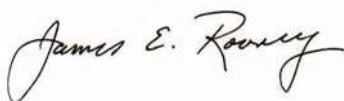
CVTE is essential for the resilience of our workforce in Massachusetts and creates opportunities for ongoing economic growth and success. As employers increasingly seek diverse talent, CVTE provides a career pathway that meets growing labor market demands. The current labor market shows that, across industries, there is a shortage of the talent needed to fill skilled positions both immediately and in the long-term.

Additionally, the bill requires the office of career technical education to proactively determine labor market needs across Massachusetts and align technical education programs with regional demand. This ensures that employers in sectors that have the most in-demand jobs are given the most attention to combat the persistent labor shortages we have seen here in the state. A symbiotic relationship between the educational systems and the business community demonstrates the Commonwealth's commitment to serving both its residents and its businesses and positions Massachusetts as a national leader in this space, enhancing opportunities for retaining talent, business, and education.

The Chamber also supports **H.538 / S.274, An Act to improve access, opportunity, and capacity in Massachusetts vocational-technical education**, filed by Representative Frank A. Moran and Senator Paul Feeney, because it includes several proposals that will expand CVTE schools' footprint and increase enrollment. The proposals include a \$3 billion bond authorization to replace and renovate CVTE infrastructure and to purchase modern training equipment. As student demand for CVTE programs continues to exceed the annual supply of CVTE seats, the Commonwealth should provide resources to vocational schools to overcome school building constraints and eliminate wait lists.

Thank you for your consideration and please reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,



James E. Rooney  
President and CEO