

June 11, 2021

Representative Alice Peisch, Chair
Joint Committee on Education
State House, Room 473G
Boston, MA 02133

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

Dear Chairwoman Peisch and Chairman Lewis,

On behalf of the [Massachusetts Business Coalition on Skills](#) (MBCS) and the [Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education \(MBAE\) Affiliate Network](#), we are writing in support of H.691/S.351, *An Act expanding high school student access to earn industry recognized credentials*. MBAE brought this bill to the legislature and worked with Representative Jeffrey N. Roy and Senator Eric P. Lesser, co-chairs of the Advanced Manufacturing Caucus and champions for equitable skills development, to file it. The MBCS – a coalition of 27 diverse business organizations from across the state that advocates for equitable skills development policies – and the MBAE Affiliate Network – comprised of 37 chambers of commerce and industry associations from across Massachusetts – support these bills because they expand opportunities for high school students to earn industry-recognized credentials (IRCs) that are tied to labor market demand and high-wage jobs.

Employers across the Commonwealth struggle to fill open positions with employees that possess the skillsets required for employers to run or expand their businesses successfully. Meanwhile, far more students want access to career-connected study than our current high school system allows. Integrating education and career, by making IRCs more accessible to high school students, will help build career-aligned high school pathways to good jobs or higher education and close this skills gap by ensuring that the education our students receive aligns with the skills needed to be successful in the workforce.

Labor market alignment is key to the value of IRCs and closing skills gaps, but right now, Massachusetts has low alignment between the credentials earned by high school students and the credentials in demand among employers.ⁱ This is troublesome because the state's employers report that one of the clearest indicators of the whether a high school graduate is hireable is if they possess an in-demand IRC.ⁱⁱ

H.691 and S.351 offer a dynamic solution to closing the skills gap by annually prioritizing IRCs with high employment value that are recognized by higher education institutions and respond to changing regional labor market demands. In turn, the prioritized IRCs can guide students toward high-wage and in-demand careers while also assisting employers in their efforts to identify job candidates that possess the skills needed to succeed.

Investing in and fostering the talent of our future workforce will keep Massachusetts a global competitor and create new opportunities for residents and businesses alike. Data-driven efforts to expand access to IRCs, like the one outlined in H.691/S.351, will work to close the skills gap, address labor market demands, and provide students with career pathways toward high-wage and in-demand jobs.

Thank you for your consideration. The Coalition and MBAE Affiliate Network look forward to being a resource to you as the Legislature continues to prioritize skills development and attainment.

Massachusetts Business Coalition on Skills

- 1Berkshire
- Amplify Latinx
- Bedford Area Chamber of Commerce
- Better Business Bureau Serving Eastern MA, ME, RI & VT
- Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce
- Kendall Square Association
- Mass Technology Leadership Council

MBAE Partners and Affiliates

- 1Berkshire
- Associated Industries of Massachusetts
- Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Cape Cod Canal Chamber of Commerce
- Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce
- Mass Technology Leadership Council
- Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education
- Massachusetts Business Roundtable

- Massachusetts Association of Insurance Agents
- Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education
- Massachusetts Business Roundtable
- Massachusetts State Automobile Dealers Association
- Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation
- Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Neponset River Regional Chamber
- Newton-Needham Regional Chamber of Commerce
- North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce
- North Shore Chamber of Commerce
- One SouthCoast Chamber
- Quincy Chamber of Commerce
- Retailers Association of Massachusetts
- Somerville Chamber of Commerce
- Springfield Regional Chamber
- Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council
- Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Massachusetts High Technology Council
- Massachusetts Society of CPAs
- Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation
- NAIOP Massachusetts, The Commercial Real Estate Development Association
- Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Neponset River Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Newton-Needham Regional Chamber
- North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce
- One SouthCoast Chamber
- Quincy Chamber of Commerce
- Retailers Association of Massachusetts
- Springfield Business Leaders for Education
- Springfield Regional Chamber
- Taunton Area Chamber of Commerce of Commerce
- Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council
- Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce

ⁱ ExcelinEd and Burning Glass Technologies. September 2020. [Credentials Matter Phase 2: A 2020 Update on Credential Attainment and Workforce Demand in America.](#)

ⁱⁱ Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce. May 2019. [Ready for Work: Leveraging the Madison Park Talent Pipeline.](#)