

November 3, 2023

Michael Baldino
Director and General Counsel
Massachusetts Broadband Institute
Via email: baldino@masstech.org

Dear Mr. Baldino:

As Massachusetts business leaders, we are highly cognizant of the important investments coming to our Commonwealth via the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, including via the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program. As the Massachusetts Broadband Institute's office undertakes the vital task of developing the 5-year BEAD Action Plan and Initial Proposal, we want to provide context about the importance of investing in digital skills. The Massachusetts Business Coalition on Skills urges **the Institute to invest in workforce development, which is a core element of Massachusetts' BEAD planning and implementation.**

A recent study¹ found that **92 percent of "Help Wanted" ads in Massachusetts seek workers with digital skills.** Demand is high across all industries, including not just those that are traditionally thought of as technology-related (such as finance, insurance, and broadband infrastructure) but also healthcare, construction, manufacturing, and warehousing/logistics.

The study also found that jobs at every level need digital skills, including entry-level roles that require a high school diploma or 2-year degree. And workers of all ages need opportunities to acquire new digital skills to advance their career and economic mobility.

Earlier research has documented the importance of particular strategies that can help workers build in-demand technology skills.² They include: investing in workers' essential, foundational digital skills; providing contextualized, real-world learning opportunities to learn industry-specific skills; and fostering collaborations between businesses and education and workforce development providers.³ Our coalition has long advocated for investments in exactly these types of strategies – essential skills, experiential learning, and career vocational technical education (CVTE).

Massachusetts is in an enviable position compared to other states. Our Commonwealth has already invested robustly in broadband access. As a result, your office will likely be able to use federal BEAD funds for both last-mile deployment *and* non-deployment activities. Given this extraordinary opportunity, we urge you to **prioritize investments in digital skills** as the new federal funds are distributed.

In particular, we encourage you to support industry sector partnerships that bring businesses together with education and workforce training providers to prepare workers with in-demand skills, including digital skills. These partnerships can play an important role in closing digital

¹ [Closing the Digital Skill Divide](#) (National Skills Coalition, 2023).

² [The New Landscape of Digital Literacy](#) (National Skills Coalition, 2020) and [Boosting Digital Literacy in the Workplace](#) (National Skills Coalition, 2020).

³ *Ibid.*



skill divides and ensuring equitable access and credential attainment for all Massachusetts residents. We welcome the opportunity to further discuss these issues with you and your staff.

We would be glad to provide additional examples of how digital skill-building issues are affecting Massachusetts businesses today, and what your office can do to ensure that businesses and workers thrive as the Commonwealth's BEAD plan is implemented.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Massachusetts Business Coalition on Skills

1Berkshire
Amplify Latinx
Associated General Contractors of Mass
Bedford Area Chamber of Commerce
Better Business Bureau Serving Eastern MA, ME, RI & VT
Black Economic Council of Massachusetts
Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce
Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce
Charles River Regional Chamber of Commerce
Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce
Kendall Square Association
Mass Technology Leadership Council
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 of Commerce
North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce
North Shore Chamber of Commerce
One SouthCoast Chamber of Commerce
Quincy Chamber of Commerce
Retailers Association of Massachusetts
Somerville Chamber of Commerce
Springfield Regional Chamber of Commerce
Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council
Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce