



Hiring Skilled Workers Remains Top Challenge, Shows MA Business Leader Survey

November 16, 2023 (BOSTON) – Reporting that hiring and finding workers with the right skills continues to be a top challenge, an overwhelming majority (95%) of Massachusetts business leaders support Gov. Maura Healey’s efforts to improve our education system to ensure more students are better prepared for college and/or careers, according to a new survey commissioned by the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education (MBAE) and [Student Pathways to Success](#), a cross-sector coalition of organizations committed to educational equity and that represent students, parents, educators, and employers. Only a quarter (25%) believe that the state’s workforce currently has the qualifications needed to succeed in their respective industries.

"This survey underscores a vital need to forge stronger connections between our students and the good-paying careers available now in our growing health, life sciences, clean tech, and other sectors," said Ed Lambert, Executive Director of MBAE. "By addressing this challenge, we can cultivate a diverse, highly skilled workforce capable of driving and sustaining economic growth throughout the Commonwealth."

The survey of 141 Massachusetts business leaders revealed:

- 87% say it’s very (35%) or somewhat (52%) difficult to find people with the right skills.
- 73% say hiring is their top challenge (13%) or near their top challenges (60%).
- 95% say it should be the top (26%) among the top (69%) priorities of Gov. Healey’s administration to make improvements to our education system to ensure that more students are better prepared for college and/or careers.

"The life sciences industry continues to grow, and employers that are looking for talented individuals who have the skills to get hired and grow with their companies are finding it challenging," said Kendalle Burlin O’Connell, CEO and President of MassBio. "Getting new and diverse communities into the life sciences starts with awareness and outreach, and the Commonwealth must continue to strive for more effective pathways linking students who are in school with the jobs and careers that are available to them after graduation. This is how Massachusetts lengthens its economic lead and delivers opportunities to all residents."

The survey finds that few business leaders think our schools could do more to prepare students for careers. Other key findings include:

- Three in five business leaders are very satisfied with higher education in Massachusetts, while just 29% report similar satisfaction with public K-12 education in the state.
- Two-thirds of business leaders expressed that over half of their company's positions require a post-secondary credential.
- Teaching essential, real-world skills such as communication, collaboration, and creativity ranked as the top education priority among business leaders (74%).
- Yet less than half of business leaders (49%) feel the commonwealth’s education system is doing a good job in getting kids ready for a career, including just 4% who feel the system is doing a very good job.

"The Massachusetts talent shortage can be addressed by unlocking untapped potential — especially within communities that are in need of increased access and information about the opportunities at their fingertips," said Jay Ash, President and CEO of the Massachusetts Competitive Partnership. "We need to do a better job at breaking these barriers by creating inclusive and accessible environments, and by educating communities and local leaders about the resources that are available to them."

Student Pathways to Success worked with Lincoln Park Strategies to survey business leaders throughout Massachusetts, with respondents representing a range of industries and business sizes, and 13 of the Commonwealth's 14 counties. Nearly half were executives or owners, and a majority are heavily involved in the hiring process, with other respondents identifying as vice presidents, directors, managers, associates, and other titles.

Last month, MBAE, in collaboration with the Student Pathways to Success, released [*Lifting Our Communities: Building Education Pathways to Economic Opportunity for All*](#). The comprehensive report addresses Massachusetts' persistent educational inequities by featuring interviews with Black and Latino business and education leaders and students from Greater Boston. It details their personal experiences and professional insights while recommending a multifaceted solutions framework to address systemic challenges.

About MBAE

The [Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education](#) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that, together with our members, promotes and supports continuous improvement in our schools and innovation that is needed to ensure that EVERY student receives a high-quality education that prepares them for success in college, career, and citizenship.

About Student Pathways to Success

[Student Pathways to Success](#) is a cross-sector partnership of organizations committed to educational equity and that represent students, parents, educators, and employers. It aims to universalize access to a meaningful and relevant high school education for all students that puts them on a pathway to college and career success.