

Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce  
Government Affairs Breakfast Forum

"Solving the Skills Shortage"

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- As I look around, Boston, Massachusetts and New England more generally no issue more important than workforce development
  - very low unemployment rates
  - many industries tell us can't grow because can't find qualified workers
  - this is not necessarily just a fact of business cycle – businesses that are making Mass. grow are, of necessity focused on innovation, technology and efficiency – they need workers with high skills even at entry levels
  - moreover, as business cycles come and go the region needs strategies that help the least among us to be better prepared; welfare-to-work won't help us in the long run if those workers are the last in/first out when business slows down

• Thus, I see workforce development as vital to both regional growth, and social equity – not just <sup>Public</sup> private sector issues.

Private sector must be involved

Fortunate in  
 Mass to have  
 strong bi-partisan  
 support for  
 workforce  
 development  
 House  
 S. House  
 → together on  
 ed reform  
 which is a  
 course  
 → provided funding  
 for school-to-career  
 budgeted funds  
 career centers  
 in

- Key focal point for private sector involvement – Boston’s Private Industry Council, which also functions as one of the Commonwealth’s Regional Employment Boards – I could bore you with all legislative and other history here, but suffice it to say the PIC functions as Boston’s workforce board. <sup>It</sup> We combine <sup>s</sup> public, private and educational interests on the PIC Board; <sup>it</sup> we set <sup>s</sup> policies <sup>and</sup> <sup>allocate that</sup> direct funds for a variety of Federal and State education and job training programs, and <sup>it</sup> we perform <sup>s</sup> many activities necessary to creating work and higher ed opportunities for Boston’s school children, to training for existing workers through <sup>our</sup> one-stop career centers, and to making welfare-to-work a reality

- I want to focus my remarks on what we at the PIC see as two essentials for workforce development: employer involvement, and measurement

- Employer involvement is you. Virtually every company involved in the Private Industry Council is moving beyond the “advisory board” approach. PIC employers don’t just advise, they participate. They make the

workplace a learning place — for students, for former welfare recipients and for their own entry level employees.

This kind of involvement with the community is not without its struggles. But, thanks to support from the state legislature, <sup>the P.I.C</sup> ~~we~~ provide <sup>s</sup> the right staff support to employers who are willing to participate. In the end, however, hiring from the community pays off for the company. Workplace learning becomes worker productivity within about six weeks. Companies meet their skill needs on the front line without recruiting from outside the region.

- To realize the full potential of private participation in education and workforce development, we need to double <sup>and</sup> then triple the number of employers involved. Thus, the importance of the Chamber of Commerce's leadership. Employers, particularly small companies, trust the Chamber to address issues that are clearly in the self-interest of business.

Increasingly, finding and retaining a skilled front line workforce is the business of business. When the Chamber says that active involvement in the education and training system is essential to meeting Greater Boston's workforce needs, companies listen.

- There is a skill gap in this region that places the health of our economy at risk. We need to bring local residents onto the workplace as an extension of the classroom and the community based training program. We need to make this a part of local corporate culture, part of the way we do business in Boston. We cannot expect the public system to meet our needs on its own. Community colleges such as Bunker Hill have always realized this and succeeded in partnership with individual businesses. We know what to do. Now it is a matter of reaching a scale that meets the needs of local employers.

- Finally, allow me to insist that measurement really matters.

As Chair of the PIC, I have insisted that we measure the value of what we do and its impact on students, job seekers

*link put  
sector public  
involvement  
→ need proof  
that programs  
work*

and employers. We are beginning to make progress in this area.

We can document better grades, better attendance and better test scores among high school students who work at area companies as an extension of the classroom. Just as importantly, we can document higher college going rates, college graduation rates and higher paying jobs and career paths. The three one stop career centers are showing better customer satisfaction rates--from both job seekers and employers—and continuously improving placement rates. We must manage the connection between the public and private sector through persistent attention to measurement. We must do this work intelligently to convince the public, the legislature and employers that the investments we make in this system pay off for everyone involved.

- In closing, allow me to suggest that we may have come to a moment when business self interest and the needs of the community are totally aligned. Our companies need better skills on the front line and our residents need better paying

jobs. What's missing is the connection—the match between motivated job seekers and employers who are willing to develop their skills, with the right support from the publicly funded education and training systems. I believe that the people and the resources necessary to meet this challenge are in this room today—if we both get it and get it together.