

**SENATE . . . . . No. xxxxx**

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

PRESENTED BY:

***Kenneth J. Donnelly***

*To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:*

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the passage of the accompanying bill:

*An Act establishing a middle-skills council and the creation of regional skills academies in the Commonwealth.*

PETITION OF:

NAME:

*Kenneth J. Donnelly*

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

*Fourth Middlesex*

**SENATE . . . . . No. xxxxx**

*[Pin Slip]*

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

**In the Year Two Thousand Eleven**

*An Act establishing a middle-skills council and the creation of regional skills academies in the Commonwealth.*

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:*

1 SECTION 1. A middle-skills council is hereby established to make recommendations to  
2 increase the readiness for and success of working adults and other non-traditional students in  
3 education and training for jobs that require more than a high school diploma but less than a four-  
4 year degree. The recommendations shall focus on how to increase the number of adults with  
5 these middle-skills and middle-skills credentials that meet Massachusetts' long-term labor  
6 market needs.

7 The council shall establish baseline data on the Commonwealth's 'middle-skills gap' - the gap  
8 between the skills held by the Commonwealth's workers and the skills needed by its employers  
9 for jobs that require more than a high school diploma but less than a four-year degree. The

10 council may draw upon the work of the Vision Project of the department of higher education and  
11 other data sources as appropriate.

12 The council shall examine the feasibility and impact of making changes to adult basic education,  
13 developmental education, and student support services to increase adult and non-traditional  
14 student success in middle-skill education and training. Specifically, the council shall make  
15 recommendations for minimizing remediation by developing a system-wide plan to better align  
16 adult basic education and pre-college programs with post-secondary institutions. The council  
17 shall examine the feasibility and impact of all relevant strategies, including but not limited to,  
18 ways to: leverage and shape adult skills training to maximize responsiveness to industry needs;  
19 streamline or restructure developmental education to enable faster and increased rates of skill  
20 and credential attainment, including more clearly delineating the roles and responsibilities of  
21 community colleges and adult basic education providers; establish a uniform system for  
22 transferring course credits between community colleges to promote faster and higher completion  
23 rates; evaluate the efficacy of current college placement tests and where appropriate replace them  
24 with standard competency-based assessment tools and improved methods for placement in post-  
25 secondary education; and increase the retention, skill, and credential attainment rate of non-  
26 traditional students in post-secondary education and training. The council should coordinate  
27 with existing efforts of the departments of elementary and secondary education, higher  
28 education, and labor and workforce development, the Massachusetts workforce investment  
29 board, and the Massachusetts executive office of community colleges.

30 The council shall consist of 16 members, 1 of whom shall be the secretary of labor and  
31 workforce development, or his designee, who shall serve as chair; 1 of whom shall be the  
32 secretary of education, or his designee; 1 of whom shall be the commissioner of elementary and

33 secondary education, or his designee; 1 of whom shall be the commissioner of higher education,  
34 or his designee; 1 of whom shall be the president of commonwealth corporation, or his designee;  
35 1 of whom shall be a representative of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Community  
36 Colleges; 2 of whom shall be a member to be appointed by the speaker of the house; 2 of whom  
37 shall be a member to be appointed by the senate president; 1 of whom shall be a member to be  
38 appointed by the minority leader of the house; 1 of whom shall be a member to be appointed by  
39 the minority leader of the senate; 1 of whom shall be a member to be appointed by the secretary  
40 of labor and workforce development from the business community; 1 of whom shall be a  
41 representative of the Massachusetts AFL/CIO; and 1 of whom shall be a representative of the  
42 Center for Labor Market Studies; and 1 of whom shall be a representative of adult basic  
43 education or non-traditional college students in the Commonwealth.

44 The council shall conduct its first meeting not more than 90 days after the effective date of this  
45 Act and shall conduct not less than 3 public hearings in geographically diverse regions of the  
46 Commonwealth. Not later than 18 months after the effective date of this Act, the council shall  
47 submit a report of its findings and recommendations together with proposed legislation, if any, to  
48 the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate who shall forward the same to the house  
49 and senate chairs of the joint committee on higher education and the chairs of the house and  
50 senate committees on ways and means.

51 SECTION 2. During the first year after the effective date of this Act, commonwealth  
52 corporation shall develop five to seven regional skills academies. In subsequent years, regional  
53 skills academies will be developed in each workforce investment area of the Commonwealth as  
54 established by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

55 The regional skills academies will address the gap between the skills currently held by the  
56 Commonwealth's workers and the skills needed by its employers for jobs that require more than  
57 a high school diploma but less than a four-year degree. The regional skills academies will also  
58 align to the Commonwealth's economic development strategy to meet the needs of employers in  
59 high growth sectors, including but not limited to health care; life sciences; information  
60 technology; and advanced manufacturing.

61 Regional skills academies shall be geographic clusters of community colleges, vocational-  
62 technical high schools, community-based organizations, and employers. Community colleges  
63 shall serve as the lead partners for each cluster. Regional skills academies will increase the  
64 number of Massachusetts residents with middle-skills and middle-skill credentials by carrying  
65 out activities that may include but are not limited to, providing programs accessible to working,  
66 unemployed or underemployed adults; defining and establishing the process for students to  
67 transition from adult basic education programs to college-based programs; providing stackable  
68 certificates and credentials, non-semester-based modular programs, and accelerated associate  
69 degree programs; providing sector-based training including developmental education; providing  
70 student support services; using competency-based placement assessments; leveraging regional  
71 resources, including shared equipment and funding; partnering with two or more training  
72 organizations in a region; and partnering with two or more employers in a region.

73 Commonwealth corporation shall award competitive grants from the Workforce Competitiveness  
74 Trust Fund to the regional skills academies to carry out these activities. Commonwealth  
75 corporation shall be responsible for conducting an evaluation on the outcomes of the regional  
76 skills academies and presenting its findings to the middle-skills council.

77 SECTION 3. The secretary of labor and workforce development in consultation with the  
78 secretaries of education, and economic development, as well as the president of commonwealth  
79 corporation, shall define regions in the state on which both to base a review of local and regional  
80 labor market information and to develop regional plans to coordinate training and education  
81 activities to target employer needs and to meet Massachusetts' demand for middle-skill workers.  
82 Upon designation of the regions, commonwealth corporation shall ensure that the workforce  
83 investment boards established by Public Law 105-220, 112 Stat. 936, assist in convening  
84 meetings in each of the regions to undertake the review of labor market information and develop  
85 the regional plans.

86 The meeting participants shall include representatives from each workforce investment area,  
87 established by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, and, at a minimum, the presidents of any  
88 of the region's community colleges; the principals of any vocational-technical high schools; the  
89 executive director of the appropriate workforce investment boards; the fiscal agents for  
90 workforce investment act funding; labor, education and industry leaders, and the director of the  
91 regional skills academy, if applicable. Commonwealth corporation shall aggregate these  
92 findings and report them at least annually to the middle-skills council.

93 SECTION 4. The regional skills academies shall be funded at a level of one million dollars each  
94 from a combination of sources including the consolidated budget surplus. Notwithstanding any  
95 general or special law to the contrary, after complying with clause (a) of section 5C of chapter 29  
96 of the General Laws, the comptroller shall dispose of the consolidated net surplus in the  
97 budgetary funds for fiscal year 2011 and each year thereafter ending in 2014 by transferring up  
98 to \$8,000,000 from the General Fund to the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund, established  
99 by section 2WWW of chapter 29.

100 SECTION 5. Subject to appropriation, the regional skills academies will be funded by the  
101 Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund, established by section 2WWW of chapter 29 and  
102 managed by commonwealth corporation on behalf of the executive office of labor and workforce  
103 development.