

SENATE No. 00921

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:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
<i>Kenneth J. Donnelly</i>	<i>Fourth Middlesex</i>
<i>Sean Garballey</i>	<i>23rd Middlesex</i>
<i>Ellen Story</i>	<i>3rd Hampshire</i>
<i>Karen E. Spilka</i>	<i>Second Middlesex and Norfolk</i>
<i>Louis L. Kafka</i>	<i>8th Norfolk</i>
<i>David M. Nangle</i>	<i>17th Middlesex</i>
<i>Paul Brodeur</i>	<i>32nd Middlesex</i>
<i>Denise Andrews</i>	<i>2nd Franklin</i>
<i>Todd M. Smola</i>	<i>1st Hampden</i>
<i>Harold P. Naughton, Jr.</i>	<i>12th Worcester</i>
<i>Michael R. Knapik</i>	<i>Second Hampden and Hampshire</i>
<i>Susan C. Fargo</i>	<i>Third Middlesex</i>
<i>Michael O. Moore</i>	<i>Second Worcester</i>
<i>Michael F. Rush</i>	<i>Suffolk and Norfolk</i>
<i>Michael J. Rodrigues</i>	<i>First Bristol and Plymouth</i>
<i>James B. Eldridge</i>	<i>Middlesex and Worcester</i>

<i>Thomas M. McGee</i>	<i>Third Essex and Middlesex</i>
<i>Sal N. DiDomenico</i>	<i>Middlesex, Suffolk, and Essex</i>
<i>Richard T. Moore</i>	<i>Worcester and Norfolk</i>
<i>Katherine M. Clark</i>	<i>Middlesex and Essex</i>
<i>William N. Brownsberger</i>	<i>24th Middlesex</i>
<i>Angelo J. Puppolo, Jr.</i>	<i>12th Hampden</i>
<i>James E. Timilty</i>	<i>Bristol and Norfolk</i>

SENATE No. 00921

By Mr. Donnelly, petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 921) of Moore, Fargo, Knapik and other members of the General Court for legislation to establish a middle-skills council and the creation of regional skills academies in the Commonwealth [Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development].

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’ -
8 the gap between the skills held by the Commonwealth’s workers and the skills needed by its
9 employers for jobs that require more than a high school diploma but less than a four-year degree.

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

12 The council shall examine the feasibility and impact of making changes to adult basic
13 education, developmental education, and student support services to increase adult and non-
14 traditional student success in middle-skill education and training. Specifically, the council shall
15 make recommendations for minimizing remediation by developing a system-wide plan to better
16 align adult basic education and pre-college programs with post-secondary institutions. The
17 council shall examine the feasibility and impact of all relevant strategies, including but not
18 limited to, ways to: leverage and shape adult skills training to maximize responsiveness to
19 industry needs; streamline or restructure developmental education to enable faster and increased
20 rates of skill and credential attainment, including more clearly delineating the roles and
21 responsibilities of community colleges and adult basic education providers; establish a uniform
22 system for transferring course credits between community colleges to promote faster and higher
23 completion rates; evaluate the efficacy of current college placement tests and where appropriate
24 replace them with standard competency-based assessment tools and improved methods for
25 placement in post-secondary education; and increase the retention, skill, and credential
26 attainment rate of non-traditional students in post-secondary education and training. The council
27 should coordinate with existing efforts of the departments of elementary and secondary
28 education, higher education, and labor and workforce development, the Massachusetts workforce
29 investment 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
45 of this Act and shall conduct not less than 3 public hearings in geographically diverse regions of
46 the Commonwealth. Not later than 18 months after the effective date of this Act, the council
47 shall submit a report of its findings and recommendations together with proposed legislation, if
48 any, to the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate who shall forward the same to
49 the house and senate chairs of the joint committee on higher education and the chairs of the
50 house and 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
74 Competitiveness Trust Fund to the regional skills academies to carry out these activities.
75 Commonwealth corporation shall be responsible for conducting an evaluation on the outcomes of
76 the regional 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
87 area, established by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, and, at a minimum, the presidents of
88 any of the region's community colleges; the principals of any vocational-technical high schools;
89 the 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
94 dollars each from a combination of sources including the consolidated budget surplus.
95 Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, after complying with clause (a) of
96 section 5C of chapter 29 of the General Laws, the comptroller shall dispose of the consolidated
97 net surplus in the budgetary funds for fiscal year 2011 and each year thereafter ending in 2014 by
98 transferring up to \$8,000,000 from the General Fund to the Workforce Competitiveness Trust
99 Fund, established 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.