

September 15, 2023

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Mayorkas:

As leaders of Massachusetts business and trade associations, collectively representing more than 10,000 employers and 1,000,000 employees, we are writing in support of the request made to you and the Biden-Harris Administration by Governor Maura Healey to address the “state of emergency” relative to migrants entering the Commonwealth.

Currently, there are nearly 6,300 families in the state’s shelter system, and these numbers will continue to grow as it is estimated that more than 1,000 families could seek shelter per month. As the Governor indicated in her recent letter, “the costs of our commitment to provide shelter and services are immense and stretched to a degree that is unprecedented in the history of our state.”

At the same time, due to circumstances outside their control, these new arrivals are unable to work to support themselves and their families and free themselves from a shelter system in crisis. While the unemployment rate remains low in Massachusetts, employers continue to look for workers and cite the inability to find talent to fill open jobs as a top concern for economic growth and competitiveness. In a survey conducted over the summer by the Associated Industries of Massachusetts, 74% of employers said they currently had vacancies, and many said the vacancies comprised 10% or more of their workforce. Similarly, in a recent survey of members of the Massachusetts Business Roundtable, 75% of employers expect difficulty in finding workers over the next year. It is critical to these families, our communities, and our economy that these migrants are allowed to work as quickly as possible.

In addition to the recent letter from Governor Healey, you have received similar correspondence from members of the Massachusetts Congressional Delegation and Attorney General Andrea Campbell. Each have implored action on the federal level to expedite processing of work authorization, and of importance, allow for provisional work authorization while the administrative process unfolds. We strongly support this request. As representatives of the business community, we also add our voices in support of additional federal funding to address this crisis and other changes to federal immigration policy that would both mitigate the current crisis while simultaneously addressing workforce shortages in the Commonwealth.

Massachusetts has always been a place where those in need can find housing, education, health care and other services, including the migrants entering our state. The crisis here is both economic and humanitarian. We write in support of efforts by our public leaders to work in partnership with you to address it. We respectfully urge your immediate action.

Sincerely,

Chris Anderson, President, Massachusetts High Technology Council

Jonathan Butler, President & CEO, 1Berkshire

JD Chesloff, President & CEO, Massachusetts Business Roundtable

Zach Donah, Deputy CEO, Massachusetts Society of CPAs

Doug Howgate, President, Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation

Jon Hurst, President, Retailers Association of Massachusetts

Rick Kidder, Chief Operating Officer, One SouthCoast Chamber

Kendalle Burlin O'Connell, Chief Executive Officer & President, MassBIO

Nicole Obi, President & CEO, Black Economic Council of Massachusetts

Greg Reibman, President, Charles River Regional Chamber

Eneida M. Román, President & CEO, Amplify LatinX

Jim Rooney, President & CEO, Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce

Tamara Small, CEO, NAIOP Massachusetts, The Commercial Real Estate Development Association

Brooke Thomson, President, Associated Industries of Massachusetts