



The General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
State House, Boston, MA 02133

September 22, 2023

The Honorable Joseph Biden
President of the United States
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Kamala Harris
Vice President of the United States
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Steve Scalise
Majority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear President Biden, Vice President Harris, Speaker McCarthy, Leaders Schumer, Scalise, McConnell, Jeffries, & Members of the United States Congress:

As elected officials sworn to serve the interests of our respective constituencies, we the undersigned members of the General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts find it necessary to urge the honorable members of the United States Congress to enact legislation designed to repair fundamental flaws in our federal immigration system.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the various challenges it engendered, American businesses, employers, investors, consumers, and workers responded with vigorous resilience. Virtually every sector of the United States economy, however, is now grappling with ongoing labor shortages. According to the latest population and demographic data, these shortages will continue to stunt our growth and become even more urgent if left unaddressed.

At the same time, our outdated federal immigration system is in desperate need of reform. Our country needs a functional gateway at the border that safeguards our national security from illegal entrants while providing noncitizens seeking lawful entry a practical means of obtaining approval to reside and find gainful employment.

We, the undersigned, respectfully urge the honorable members of the United States Congress to advance a bipartisan solution to these issues. We, the undersigned, respectfully urge the enactment of legislation designed to establish statutory reforms that more effectively fulfill the goals of our federal immigration system and serve the interests of our citizens.

I. Whereas, urgent workforce shortages in a variety of critical sectors are preventing the United States economy from realizing its maximum potential,

Whereas, according to [the United States Chamber of Commerce](#), the United States currently has 9.8 million job openings and only 5.9 million unemployed workers,

Whereas, according to [the United States Chamber of Commerce](#), the durable goods manufacturing industry would only fill roughly 75% of vacant jobs if every unemployed person with experience in the industry were employed,

Whereas, according to an October 2022 survey by the [American Public Transportation Center](#), 96% of transit agencies reported experiencing a workforce shortage, 84% of which said the shortage is affecting their ability to provide service,

Whereas, according to the [United States Chamber of Commerce](#), the Commonwealth of Massachusetts currently has 92,049 workers available for 243,000 vacant jobs and only 47 workers available for every 100 openings,

Whereas, according to a March 2023 [Massachusetts Health Policy Commission report](#), healthcare worker vacancy rates in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts last year were 56% for licensed practical nurses, 32% for mental health workers, 13.6% for registered nurses – more than double the 2019 rate of 6.4%,

Whereas, according to a recent [Massachusetts Clean Energy Center report](#), to meet our 2030 emission requirements, the Massachusetts clean energy workforce “will need to grow by an additional 29,700 full-time equivalent workers, which will require 38,100 workers to be trained and ready to deploy some or all of their time on climate-critical work,”

Whereas, according to the [National Center on Health Statistics](#), the national fertility rate has fallen 15.9% from its average between 2000-2010, the Commonwealth’s statewide birth rate has fallen 28.1% since 1990, and demographic data collectively indicates critical workforce shortages are on pace to continue to grow,

II. Whereas, existing United States immigration policy does not establish a system capable of adequately authorizing new potential workers or preventing the entry of unauthorized individuals,

Whereas, the most recent comprehensive federal immigration reform in the United States - the Immigration Reform and Control Act - was passed by Congress in 1986, or 37 years ago,

Whereas, the employer-sponsored immigration system is subject to annual limits established in 1990,

Whereas, the annual limits for employer-sponsored immigration do not account for changes in domestic workforce needs or population demographic trends,

Whereas, according to [World Bank Open Data](#), since the establishment of annual limits for employer-sponsored immigration, the size of the U.S. economy has more than quadrupled from roughly \$6 trillion to more than \$25 trillion,

Whereas, the process for authorizing select employer-sponsored immigration applicants to enter the country via a lottery system substantially inhibits the creation and expansion of domestic businesses,

Whereas, according to [Cato Institute research](#), 1,438,758 employment-based skilled-worker immigration applications were stuck in processing backlogs as of September 2021,

Whereas, according to [United States Citizens and Immigration Services \(USCIS\)](#), for every form of legal immigration available, there are 5,262,179 applications in total currently pending,

Whereas, according to the [United States Customs & Border Protection](#), a record 2.4 million undocumented noncitizens were apprehended at the United States border in Fiscal Year 2022,

Whereas, according to the [United States Department of Homeland Security](#), there were approximately 11.39 million undocumented noncitizens without legal authorization residing in the U.S. in 2018; and more recent projections estimate the current population is approximately 11.5-12 million,

Whereas, the proliferation of undocumented noncitizens working within the United States creates an environment of exploitation negatively impacting the value of labor and the rights of all workers,

Whereas, according to the [United Nations High Commission for Refugees report](#), the number of people displaced by climate change-related disasters since 2010 has risen to 21.5 million;

Whereas, according to an [Institute for Economics & Peace report](#), drastic changes in habitability could result in up to 1.2 billion climate crisis refugees worldwide by 2050,

Whereas, comprehensive immigration reform is urgently needed to address domestic workforce shortages and establish a functional system for processing entrants to the United States,

Whereas, existing applicants currently seeking authorization to enter the United States and undocumented noncitizens currently residing in the United States represent an abundance of potential employees for our domestic workforce,

Whereas, according to the [United States Chamber of Commerce Immigration Data Center](#), in the first two quarters of Fiscal Year 2023, 483,000 employer-sponsored visa applications were filed against the 85,000 annual statutory quota, so that only one individual will obtain a visa for every six applicants,

Whereas, according to the [United States Chamber of Commerce Immigration Data Center](#), in the first two quarters of Fiscal Year 2023, more than 135,829 seasonal worker applications were filed - more than double the annual statutory quota of 66,000,

Whereas, since the United States Congress last enacted immigration legislation over thirty years ago, the volume and nature of immigration to the United States has [evolved drastically](#),

Whereas, according to a recent [Center for American Progress report](#), providing a pathway to citizenship for eligible and undocumented workers would boost the Gross Domestic Product of the United States by a cumulative total of \$1.5 trillion over 10 years and create 400,800 new jobs,

Whereas, according to the [American Immigration Council](#), over 40% of companies on the Fortune 500 were founded by immigrants or the children of immigrants, and immigrants are three times more likely to start a business than native-born Americans,

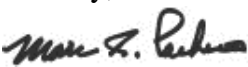
Whereas, on May 1, 2023, [more than 440](#) chambers of commerce and business associations from all 50 states sent [a letter](#) to Congress urging legislation designed to enhance legal immigration to help fill vacant jobs,

Whereas, the influx of immigrants to the United States has historically helped establish a robust domestic workforce,

Now, therefore,

Resolved, that we the undersigned members of the Massachusetts General Court respectfully urge the United States Congress to act expeditiously to enact legislation relative to comprehensive immigration reform and, in doing so, help resolve the dual crises of a dysfunctional immigration system and a rapidly-devolving domestic workforce shortage.

Sincerely,



Senator Marc R. Pacheco
Dean of the Massachusetts Senate
Third Plymouth & Bristol

Senator Michael D. Brady
Second Plymouth & Norfolk

Senator Nick Collins
First Suffolk

Senator John J. Cronin
Worcester and Middlesex

Senator Julian A. Cyr
Cape & Islands

Senator Lydia Edwards
Third Suffolk

Senator Paul R. Feeney
Bristol & Norfolk

Senator Barry R. Finegold
Second Essex & Middlesex

Senator John F. Keenan
Norfolk & Plymouth

Senator Edward J. Kennedy
First Middlesex

Senator Robyn K. Kennedy
First Worcester

Senator Jason M. Lewis
Fifth Middlesex

Senator Joan B. Lovely
Second Essex

Senator Michael O. Moore
Second Worcester

Senator Susan L. Moran
Plymouth & Barnstable

Senator Jacob R. Olivera
Hampden, Hampshire, & Worcester

Senator Pavel M. Payano
First Essex

Senator Rebecca L. Rausch
Norfolk, Bristol & Middlesex

Senator Bruce E. Tarr
First Essex & Middlesex

Senator John C. Velis
Hampden & Hampshire

Representative James C. Arena-DeRosa
Eighth Middlesex

Representative F. Jay Barrows
First Bristol

Representative Antonio F.D. Cabral
Thirteenth Bristol

Representative Tackey Chan
Second Norfolk

Representative Michael L. Connolly
Twenty-Sixth Middlesex

Representative Manny Cruz
Seventh Essex

Representative Kip A. Diggs
Second Barnstable

Representative Carol A. Doherty
Third Bristol

Representative Kate Donaghue
Nineteenth Worcester

Representative Peter J. Durant
Sixth Worcester

Representative Rodney M. Elliot
Sixteenth Middlesex

Representative Kimberly N. Ferguson
First Worcester

Representative Michael J. Finn
Sixth Hampden

Representative Christopher R. Flannagan
First Barnstable

Representative Paul K. Frost
Seventh Worcester

Representative Colleen M. Garry
Thirty-Sixth Middlesex

Representative Carmine L. Gentile
Thirteenth Middlesex

Representative Patricia A. Haddad
Fifth Bristol

Representative Richard M. Haggerty
Thirtieth Middlesex

Representative Christopher M. Hendricks
Eleventh Bristol

Representative Vanna Howard
Seventeenth Middlesex

Representative Steven S. Howitt
Fourth Bristol

Representative Bradley H. Jones Jr.
Twentieth Middlesex

Representative Hannah E. Kane
Eleventh Worcester

Representative Kristin E. Kassner
Second Essex

Representative Patrick J. Kearney
Fourth Plymouth

Representative Sally P. Kerans
Thirteenth Essex

Representative Jack Patrick Lewis
Seventh Middlesex

Representative Adrian C. Madaro
First Suffolk

Representative Joseph D. McKenna
Eighteenth Worcester

Representative Samantha Montaña
Fifteenth Suffolk

Representative David K. Muradian Jr.
Ninth Worcester

Representative Matthew Muratore
First Plymouth

Representative Norman J. Orrall
Twelfth Bristol

Representative Steven C. Owens
Twenty-Ninth Middlesex

Representative Estela A. Reyes
Fourth Suffolk

Representative John H. Rogers
Twelfth Norfolk

Representative Margaret R. Scarsdale
First Middlesex

Representative Paul A. Schmid III
Eighth Bristol

Representative Danillo A. Sena
Thirty-Seventh Middlesex

Representative Priscilla S. Sousa
Sixth Middlesex

Representative Andres X. Vargas
Third Essex

Representative David T. Vieira
Third Barnstable

Representative Christopher J. Worrell
Fifth Suffolk

Representative Steven G. Xiarhos
Fifth Barnstable

Representative Johnathan D. Zlotnik
Second Worcester