HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 3180 FILED ON: 1/21/2011

HOUSE . . . . . No. 2713

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Cheryl A. Coakley-Rivera

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:

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

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
Cheryl A. Coakley-Rivera	*10th Hampden*
Sean Garballey	*23rd Middlesex*
William N. Brownsberger	☐ *[District]* ☐
Christine E. Canavan	*10th Plymouth*
James J. O'Day	*14th Worcester*
Angelo J. Puppolo, Jr.	*12th Hampden*
Tom Sannicandro	*7th Middlesex*
Alice K. Wolf	*25th Middlesex*
Denise Andrews	*2nd Franklin*
Michael D. Brady	*9th Plymouth*
Antonio F. D. Cabral	*13th Bristol*
Linda Campbell	*15th Essex*
Stephen R. Canessa	*12th Bristol*
Gailanne M. Cariddi	*1st Berkshire*
Michael A. Costello	*1st Essex*

Sean Curran	*9th Hampden*
Linda Dorcena Forry	*12th Suffolk*
Anne M. Gobi	*5th Worcester*
Thomas A. Golden, Jr.	*16th Middlesex*
Jonathan Hecht	*29th Middlesex*
Kevin G. Honan	*17th Suffolk*
John D. Keenan	*7th Essex*
Kay Khan	*11th Middlesex*
Peter V. Kocot	*1st Hampshire*
Paul W. Mark	*2nd Berkshire*
Christopher M. Markey	*9th Bristol*
Kevin J. Murphy	*18th Middlesex*
David M. Nangle	*17th Middlesex*
John H. Rogers	*12th Norfolk*
George T. Ross	*2nd Bristol*
John W. Scibak	*2nd Hampshire*
Stephen Stat Smith	*28th Middlesex*
Todd M. Smola	*1st Hampden*
Christopher N. Speranzo	*3rd Berkshire*
Ellen Story	*3rd Hampshire*
William M. Straus	*10th Bristol*
Benjamin Swan	*11th Hampden*
David M. Torrisi	*14th Essex*
Chris Walsh	*6th Middlesex*
Martin J. Walsh	*13th Suffolk*

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By Ms. Coakley-Rivera of Springfield, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 2713) of Cheryl A. Coakley-Rivera and others relative to establishing a middle-skills council and the creation of regional skills academies in the Commonwealth. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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:

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

The council shall establish baseline data on the Commonwealth's 'middle-skills gap' - the gap between the skills held by the Commonwealth's workers and the skills needed by its employers for jobs that require more than a high school diploma but less than a four-year degree. The council may draw upon the work of the Vision Project of the department of higher education and other data sources as appropriate.

The council shall examine the feasibility and impact of making changes to adult basic education, developmental education, and student support services to increase adult and non-traditional student success in middle-skill education and training. Specifically, the council shall make recommendations for minimizing remediation by developing a system-wide plan to better align adult basic education and pre-college programs with post-secondary institutions. The council shall examine the feasibility and impact of all relevant strategies, including but not limited to, ways to: leverage and shape adult skills training to maximize responsiveness to industry needs; streamline or restructure developmental education to enable faster and increased rates of skill and credential attainment, including more clearly delineating the roles and responsibilities of community colleges and adult basic education providers; establish a uniform system for transferring course credits between community colleges to promote faster and higher 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
56 the Commonwealth's workers and the skills needed by its employers for jobs that require more
57 than a high school diploma but less than a four-year degree. The regional skills academies will
58 also align to the Commonwealth's economic development strategy to meet the needs of
59 employers in high growth sectors, including but not limited to health care; life sciences;
60 information technology; and advanced manufacturing.

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