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Patrick-Murray Administration Launches Access and Opportunities Effort**Effort Seeks to Open Doors, Eliminate Barriers in State Government**

BOSTON- Thursday, May 22, 2008- Keeping to his commitment to find new ways to engage individuals in their government and encourage a culture of opportunity for all residents, Governor Deval Patrick has announced the Administration's Access and Opportunities initiative.

"The people of Massachusetts deserve transparency and accountability from their government," said Governor Patrick. "By helping to ensure that rights, protections, privileges and responsibilities of citizenship are accessible to all whom live here, this effort will help us to continue to build a better Commonwealth."

The effort focuses on improving transparency and accountability in state government to make sure all individuals, no matter their race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or physical disability, have an equal opportunity to work and contract with state government.

These efforts build on the executive order Governor Patrick issued last year, reaffirming the Commonwealth's commitment to ensuring equal opportunity and promoting diversity in all aspects of state government, including hiring practices and opening up competition for state contracts.

With Governor Patrick's approval, Administration and Finance Secretary Leslie Kirwan has appointed Ron Marlow as Assistant Secretary for Access and Opportunity to lead these efforts and ensure accountability. Marlow will oversee the activities of nearly a dozen state agencies that coordinate employment hiring and contracting goals. Prior to his appointment, Marlow served as director of the Governor's Development Cabinet.

"I am honored that Secretary Kirwan has appointed me to serve the residents of the Commonwealth in this important effort," said Marlow. "It's my goal to maximize both procurement and personnel opportunities; and, for the first time, responsibility for coordination will rest in a single point of contact and entry."

The Administration will work to ensure that small businesses, particularly minority-owned and women-owned business enterprises (M/WBEs), are able to compete for state contracts by increasing oversight and coordination among agencies to make the system more accessible. For example, the Administration would help ensure proposals to bundle construction contracts would guarantee M/WBEs would be able to compete with large and longstanding companies for state contracts.

The Administration will also identify existing state programs, activities and/or policies that may unintentionally limit individual efforts to advance economically, and make recommendations to remove barriers that may exist. For example, the state's workforce development programs may not offer all the resources necessary to help place people with limited skills or limited income into employment.

Marlow will work with the Governor's Office of Civic Engagement to organize community meetings across the state to hear from residents on issues relative to access and opportunity, and will produce an annual report, which measures the success of this effort.

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