FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
December 2, 2015

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Governor Baker Signs Legislation Establishing Massachusetts’ Workforce Development Board

BOSTON – Governor Charlie Baker signed legislation today establishing the Massachusetts’ Workforce Investment Board to improve the public workforce system and enhance regional economies around the Commonwealth by focusing on employers’ growing need for skilled workers.

“With changes to the federal workforce investment laws, we now have an opportunity as a state to redefine and reimagine how we create skill-building programs,” said Governor Baker. “Creating strong regional economies by designing
programs that meet the demands of workers and businesses in each region is important to driving economic growth and new job opportunities for our residents.”

Required by federal law and currently defined by state statute (MGL, Ch. 23H, §7), the Massachusetts Workforce Development Board advises the governor and the secretary of Labor and Workforce Development with the mission to build a strong workforce system aligned with state education policies and economic development goals.

“To help people find good jobs, we are flipping the model to be demand-driven for employers, which, in turn, will help more people find jobs that suit their skill sets,” Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development Ronald L. Walker, II said. “We need to create a system that better meets the needs of employers who struggle to find talented workers.”

The legislation signed today, “An Act establishing a State Workforce Development Board” (H 3772), is based on a bill introduced by Governor Baker in June reconstituting the state’s Workforce Investment Board, reducing its membership from 65 members to 33 and ensuring the makeup of its membership continues to comply with federal requirements under the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). WIOA was signed into law by the President on July 22, 2014 reauthorizing the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 after more than a decade to transform the nation’s workforce system, and to invest in a skilled workforce.

The Workforce Development Board is charged with developing plans and policies, which are approved by the Governor, to coordinate services through One-Stop Career Centers and workforce boards. The board also issues policy recommendations to align the public workforce system and improve performance accountability, and will develop strategies to promote workforce participation of women, people of color, veterans, and persons with disabilities across industry sectors.

The reconstituted board will consist of 17 business representatives and seven workforce representatives – including two representatives from labor, one of which is chosen from the National Association of Government Employees; and four from community-based organizations. The board will also have four executive branch representatives from the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development and Executive Office of Education. The governor or a designee, two state legislators and two local government representatives will also sit on the board, which will be chaired by a member of the business representation.

Soon after taking office, Governor Baker signed an executive order creating the
Workforce Skills Cabinet, which brings together Labor and Workforce Development Secretary Ronald Walker, Education Secretary James Peyser, and Housing and Economic Development Secretary Jay Ash. The Workforce Skills Cabinet is creating strategies to further develop workers skills and meet businesses’ needs.

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