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# IKEA Retail U.S Returns \$1.4M in Unemployment Payments That Will Fund Work Skills Training

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development

MEDIA CONTACT

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**Charles Pearce, Director of Communications, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development**

**Phone**

(617) 894-4550 (tel:6178944550)

**Online**

[Charles.Pearce@massmail.state.ma.us](mailto:Charles.Pearce@massmail.state.ma.us) (mailto:Charles.Pearce@massmail.state.ma.us)

IKEA Retail U.S. will return to Massachusetts \$1,393,437 million used to pay unemployment benefits of previously furloughed employees, which will fund skill development and workforce training for both adults and youth to further assist the Commonwealth's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Massachusetts is one of 27 states to which IKEA is planning to provide funds through its new national fund designed to return unemployment benefits that IKEA employees received when stores closed during the pandemic. In addition to the U.S., IKEA is coordinating repayment plans with Belgium, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Ireland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

"Massachusetts is grateful to have responsible businesses like IKEA that work in partnership with us, ensuring that we can take urgent care of people whose livelihoods were impacted by the coronavirus outbreak while strategically planning for our recovery in the months and years ahead," said Gov. Charlie Baker.

"We are appreciative of the ongoing support from the state of Massachusetts, including the unemployment funds paid to our co-workers who were furloughed in the early weeks of the pandemic," said Javier Quiñones, IKEA Retail U.S. president. "People are the heart of our business, and the state unemployment benefits helped IKEA US co-workers during a difficult time. We now have a better understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on our business, and we've decided to "pay it forward" to support the ongoing COVID recovery efforts in our local communities."

The returned benefits will be deposited into the Commonwealth Corporation Foundation, the 501(c)(3) created to act as a fiscal conduit for grants, contracts, corporate funds and other funding that supports Commonwealth Corporation, Massachusetts' quasi-public workforce development agency.

"Unemployment insurance and workforce development create a virtuous circle. Workers trained using UI funds help businesses across Massachusetts grow and thrive," said Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito. "As those businesses succeed and paid wages grow, businesses pay it forward through growing UI contributions, which assist more workers gain the skills to

succeed in a rapidly changing economy. This cycle lays a strong foundation to support the Commonwealth’s businesses, workers, and families through both difficult and prosperous economic times.”

Workforce development is lifelong education: affordable, highly effective, and efficient in delivering the skills that businesses seek in employees. Commonwealth Corporation administers Massachusetts’ workforce development programs on behalf of the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development by investing in innovative partnerships with industry, education, and workforce organizations.

Those partnerships prepare youth and unemployed workers for jobs in demand that lead to higher rates of employment through the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund, upskill underemployed workers to meet specific employer skill demands leading to job retention, upgrades and wage gains through the Workforce Training Fund Program, and increase the share of youth engaged in education and employment pathways preparing them for post-secondary education and careers through its YouthWorks program.

“Massachusetts has worked tirelessly over the last five months to make sure that every person entitled to benefits during this global emergency has received what they need to support themselves and their families,” said Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development Rosalin Acosta. “Now, we must focus on preparing workers for a drastically changed economy so that we can meet the challenges ahead caused by this crisis.

“The nature of work is changing, and we run the risk of leaving behind workers who do not have the means to work from home, or who worked in industries heavily impacted by COVID-19,” said Commonwealth Corporation Christine Abrams. “Our grantees have done remarkable work in the face of this crisis, from transitioning their factories to personal protective equipment production, to adapting current training programs designed for hard-hit industries to now target industries that are still hiring. Our YouthWorks program has created virtual opportunities for youth across Massachusetts. We are grateful to IKEA for helping us continue this critical work.”

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# Media Contact

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## Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development

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EOLWD manages the Commonwealth's workforce development and labor departments to ensure that workers, employers, and the unemployed have the tools and training needed to succeed in the Massachusetts economy.

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