

M A S S A C H U S E T T S
HIGHTECHNOLOGYCOUNCIL

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Contact:
Mark Gallagher
617.347.1917
Mark@mhtc.org

***Massachusetts High Technology Council Statement
on President's Executive Order on Immigration***

Waltham, Mass. -- The Massachusetts and U.S. technology sectors are critical to the economic strength and success of our state, region and country. Our Massachusetts technology economy is truly innovative, with the greatest number of high-employment tech clusters in the nation. Indeed, talent is the fuel that powers our innovation-based economic future. But the extent to which demand for skilled technology workers far outstrips supply is a present and looming crisis for our state and national economy. The continuing and unnecessary shortage of H1-B visas is clearly exacerbating the problem and driving tech employers to expand outside the country.

Massachusetts is fortunate to be home to many globally competitive companies that maintain their headquarters or significant operations in the Commonwealth and 15% of the total state workforce is employed in a technology-related field. But our current immigration laws make it prohibitively difficult for these companies to include and integrate foreign-born employees into their workforce. Companies can't move key employees from global locations to their Massachusetts facilities and they struggle to hire and retain qualified foreign-born employees for their US operations.

Unfortunately, federal policymakers have repeatedly failed to enact meaningful, substantive reforms to our nation's immigration laws, missing a clear opportunity to help alleviate the talent crisis. After reviewing President Obama's recently announced executive order on immigration, the Mass High Tech Council is disappointed to note that neither he nor those who advised him recognize the urgency of removing barriers to hiring qualified foreign workers. The President's order fails to address several critical needs including, most importantly, the need to immediately increase the supply of H1-B visas.

The Council calls on President Obama and Congress to support a significant expansion of the H1-B visa program. Specifically, we urge Congress to enact bipartisan legislation that would eliminate the current annual cap of 65,000 H1-B visas, provide for a minimum of 115,000 annually and allow up to 300,000 of such visas to be issued. We urge Governor Patrick, Governor-elect Baker and the entire Massachusetts Congressional Delegation to support such legislation and take a leadership role in efforts to ensure that our national immigration policies do not hamper our prospects for economic success and expanded opportunity.

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