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***Mass. High Tech. Council Testifies in Support of Increased Access to
Public Charter Schools***

***State's leading technology group highlights economic imperative of expanding access to
charter schools.***

Today the Massachusetts High Technology Council joined a group of educators and civic leaders in support of legislation that would allow more children - particularly those in Massachusetts' highest-need communities - to attend public charter schools.

Testifying before the legislature's Joint Committee on Education, Mark Gallagher, the Council's Executive Vice President for Public Policy & Communications, urged committee members to act favorably on legislation filed by the Race to the Top Coalition and, separately, by Governor Baker.

Gallagher referenced the Council's MATTERS 50-state competitiveness dashboard which indicates that **despite the depth of its educated workforce, Massachusetts is one of the most difficult states in which to hire technology talent**, presenting an ongoing and significant challenge for local technology employers.

But Gallagher asked policymakers to view these talent supply-demand dynamics through a different frame, focused not only on the challenges it presents to employers but on the opportunities it presents for the Commonwealth's citizens, including today's school age children.

"The growing demand for technology talent is creating an increasing level of opportunity for those who have the STEM and other career readiness skills to seize those opportunities," said Gallagher.

In 2010, the Council and a coalition of business and civic leaders successfully advocated for raising existing caps on charter schools in certain school districts. Those higher enrollment limits, however, were maxed out in just a few years, and today 37,000 students are on waiting lists to attend charter schools. In 2014, the Mass. House of Representatives passed legislation that would allow the additional expansion of charter schools in underperforming school districts but the changes were rejected by the State Senate.

Gallagher urged legislators to view charter school expansion as an opportunity to show Massachusetts school children and their parents that public schools can provide a clear path to a limitless future.

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“Show me a 6th grader in a failing school today, and assess what real opportunity for success that child has. Now fast forward ten years, and show me that child with a bachelor’s degree in computer engineering from UMass Lowell or data science from WPI, and I will show you a young adult with a boundless future,” Gallagher testified.

The stakes for Massachusetts are high. There is a strong sense of urgency among business and civic leaders – in particular Council members – to bring long overdue reforms and innovations to the state’s public education system. This urgency is underscored by advances made by students in classrooms around the world – particularly in math and science. While the Massachusetts school system overall leads the nation, there are too many students and teachers trapped in underperforming schools. Massachusetts still has a long way to go to bring true educational opportunities – and rewarding career pathways – to all its students.

About the Massachusetts High Technology Council – www.mhtc.org

The Massachusetts High Technology Council is the oldest and only cross-sector association of technology, professional services, and higher education CEOs and senior executives in Massachusetts. As advocates for public policies and programs that create and maintain a healthy and competitive business climate, the Council has lead winning strategies for 37 years. In addition to its mission focus on cost competitiveness and talent development, the Council also works to preserve and strengthen federal defense assets in Massachusetts and support a robust and productive interaction among those assets and the public and private technology sectors across New England.

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