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June 12, 2017

Chairman Cyr and Chairman Coppinger,  
Joint Committee on Community Development and Small Businesses  
Massachusetts Statehouse  
Boston, Massachusetts

Dear Chairman Cyr and Chairman Coppinger and the Joint Committee Members:

Holyoke Community College, the longest serving two year college in the Commonwealth, has worked with hundreds of area businesses to promote workforce development and thousands of job seekers who are looking for the opportunity to get a job, get a better job and to do their job better.

Through Training and Workforce Options (TWO), a joint effort with Springfield Technical Community College, four business roundtables have been established in the past 5 years: Healthcare, Manufacturing, Hospitality and Tourism and Information Technology. Combined these roundtables represent over 200 area businesses. Surveys of these participating businesses indicate that the number one obstacle to business growth and expansion is the lack of qualified entry-level employees. We have worked with these industry sectors to develop programming that scale up the number of workers by bringing people back into the labor pool.

Western Massachusetts faces a unique challenge, a perfect storm. The region has had flat population growth for many years, limited immigration and migration, a rapidly aging workforce and low levels of unemployment in the suburban communities in the region. At the same time, the urban core of the region Springfield, Holyoke and parts of Chicopee maintain high rates of unemployment and a significant population of people who are long-term unemployed, underemployed or who have low levels of education. With healthcare, education and financial services being some of the largest employment sectors in the region it is difficult for those with criminal background issues to find employment. It is estimated that approximately a third of those who are unemployed have significant criminal background issues which would block or limit their access to employment. In addition, the unemployed labor pool is receives no incentive to take an entry-level job or related skills training because of the loss of critical subsistence benefits.

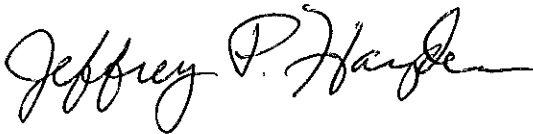
HCC delivers a DTA funded program called JumpStart, which provides workplace skills training for those on public assistance, primarily from Springfield and Holyoke. The program

offers 7 programs: Nursing Assistant, Pharmacy Technician, Business and Office Technology Specialist, Hospitality and Culinary Professional, Class B Bus and Truck Driver Program, Manufacturing Production Technician and ESOL/ABE Pathway Training. We recruit approximately 700 people a year for 160 seats. Approximately 25% of those recruits (175 people) do not enroll in program because of the potential impact on their benefits. At the same time, about 20% of those who complete the program (30-40 persons) decline employment because of the impact on their benefits. In other words, in this one program over 200 people decline the opportunity for training or employment because of the potential negative impact on their finances.

I strongly support House Bill H2807 (Cliff Effect Amelioration) because I see the detrimental impact of our current regulations, which limit individuals in need from obtaining the training they need for their own financial independence and the betterment of their families. The proposed pilot will give us the necessary flexibility to experiment with new models for the benefit of our citizens and businesses.

If you have any questions, or if you require any additional information, please contact me at your convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeffrey P. Hayden". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Jeffrey P. Hayden, VP  
Business and Community Services