



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF LABOR AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

DEVAL L. PATRICK
GOVERNOR

TIMOTHY P. MURRAY
LT. GOVERNOR

SUZANNE M. BUMP
SECRETARY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, March 19, 2008

CONTACT
Linnea Walsh, EOLWD
617/626.7111

**PATRICK ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES \$3.3M IN GRANTS
FOR EXPANDED JOB, EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR
1,800 AT-RISK YOUTH STATEWIDE**

***BERKSHIRES TO RECEIVE \$125,000 FOR 17 AT-RISK YOUTH, BUILD CAPACITY
FOR FUTURE SERVICES***

BOSTON – Wednesday, March 19, 2008 – Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development Suzanne M. Bump has announced \$3.3 million in grant funding from the Patrick Administration, which will provide jobs and educational opportunities to 1,800 young people throughout the Commonwealth.

The grants will be made to dozens of organizations working with at-risk youth under three separate grant programs administered through the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development's Commonwealth Corporation with support from the Executive Office of Health and Human Services' Department of Youth Services.

The Berkshires will receive \$125,000 – \$41,000 of which will be for **Pittsfield** alone – to connect 17 youth with job and educational opportunities, and build capacity for expanded services in the future. The Berkshire County Regional Employment Board will partner with the Berkshire Training and Employment Program to execute its grants.

Secretary Bump also announced the expansion of the state's YouthWorks summer jobs program to create the first year-round jobs program. The expanded program will hire and train over 330 additional young people between the ages 14-21 this winter in 12 communities, in addition to the more than 2,800 at-risk youth who found jobs through the summer program last year.

"This funding represents Governor Patrick's commitment to our youth and to raising the hopes and skills of young people in the Commonwealth by giving them the opportunity to work and to earn," said Secretary Bump. "We know that the single greatest predictor of holding a job as an adult is holding a job as a teenager, and that is why we must do

everything possible now to put our youth on a path that will lead to academic success and greater life time earnings.”

In addition to these grants, Governor Deval Patrick has called for increasing youth jobs funding by \$2.5M in his FY09 budget, up from \$6.7M last year.

Grants announced include:

- **“YouthWorks,”** to expand the summer jobs program to include year-round employment opportunities (\$800,000 to 12 pilot communities for 332 youth).
- **”Pathways to Success by 21” (P-21),** which provides grants to coalitions of local youth-serving organizations and service dollars to reconnect older youth to education and job career pathways (\$1.34 million to 16 regions for 1,470 youth).
- **“Bridging the Opportunity Gap,”** a program funded by the Department of Youth Services (DYS) and administered in collaboration with the Commonwealth Corporation and the workforce development system. These grants are designed to help the youth who annually transition from DYS care back into their home community (\$1.1 million for 360 youth).

Secretary of Health and Human Services Dr. JudyAnn Bigby, whose secretariat oversees DYS said, “We are committed to helping ensure that youth have as many chances as they need to succeed in life. These ‘Bridging the Opportunity Gap’ grants will provide at-risk youth with educational and employment opportunities that will serve them for years to come.”

Jobs are particularly important for teens, as data shows that a lack of work experience hampers future employability and wage growth – especially for youth who do not go on to college after finishing high school.

Statewide, the percentage of teens in the labor force has declined dramatically from 57% in 1999 to only 48% in 2006. The employment rate of teens declined from 53% in 1999 to 39% in 2006. These changes are even larger in the state’s larger cities, and among low-income families.

Nancy Snyder, President and CEO of CommCorp, the quasi-public agency that administers YouthWorks and the other grants announced today noted, “These grants will allow hundreds of young people across Massachusetts to combine school and work, and keep them moving up the career ladder. This program is about preventing kids from dropping out of school, or reconnecting them to get the credentials they need to succeed in this economy.”

Heather Boulger, Executive Director of the Berkshire County Regional Employment Board, remarked, “We look forward to using these funds to secure youth pathways to

adult employment – creating more productive citizens, filling the workforce needs of our businesses, and strengthening the Berkshires for years to come.”

A complete list of grant recipients is attached. For further information, visit www.commcorp.org.

###