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NEW REPORT ON HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE SHOWS STRONG DEMAND FOR SKILLED WORKERS *Findings show more training needed to close skills gap*

BOSTON – Monday, November 20, 2007--A new report issued by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) and the quasi-public Commonwealth Corporation reveals that the healthcare sector has been the largest employer in Massachusetts since 1995, with total employment growing as fast as six times the rate of total employment in Massachusetts from April 2003 to March 2006.

The information is part of a larger effort by the Patrick Administration to close the state's skills gap, or the mismatch between the skills job seekers have and the skill requirements for those jobs most in-demand, most notably in healthcare. The healthcare sector has struggled to fill jobs, particularly those that require post-secondary degrees, such as registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, and radiologic technologists and technicians.

"Closing the skills gap in Massachusetts is our top priority," said Suzanne M. Bump, Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development. "It is important that we pursue sector training through programs such as the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund to bridge that gap within this critical sector of our economy. Additionally, we are working with the Board of Higher Education and regional workforce boards to increase post-secondary educational opportunities."

The "*Healthcare Chartbook*," the first in a series of reports examining key industries in Massachusetts, takes an in-depth look at the workforce of the healthcare industry in the state, including its occupations, salary and educational requirements as well as a breakdown of occupations by region of the state.

Findings also show:

- The healthcare sector employs more than 450,000 people in Massachusetts or about 15 percent of the state's workforce.
- Despite a recession from December 2000 to March, 2003, the healthcare and social assistance sector added nearly 24,000 new jobs—more than any other sector.
- Across different regions, the healthcare and social assistance sector accounts for at least 10 percent of regional employment, with employment highest in Boston at 19.2 percent, followed by the Berkshire at 16.7 percent, Pioneer Valley at 16.4 percent, Central MA at 15.1 percent; Southeast and Cape and Islands at 14.7 percent, Northeast at 13.3 percent and Metro South West at 10.2 percent.
- Within the healthcare sector, about 34% are "healthcare professionals," which includes registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, physicians, surgeons, diagnostic medical sonographers and respiratory therapists.

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- The highest job vacancies are also found in the healthcare sector, which at 4.4 percent has a rate well above the overall job vacancy rate for the state. The vacancy rate for registered nurses, in particular, is about 6 percent.
- The median salary for healthcare workers has grown faster than the average for all occupations over the past several years. In fact, healthcare professionals in Massachusetts earn a median salary of \$60,320, almost twice the statewide median salary of \$37,350 for all workers in Massachusetts.

“The snapshot of the healthcare industry provided in this report makes the case for continued investment in our healthcare workforce,” said Nancy Snyder, President of Commonwealth Corporation. “Long-term investments in training and education go a long way toward easing the skills gap. A strong economy requires a competitive business community and well-paying jobs for residents; upgrading worker’s skills in coordination with our employers serves both.”

To view the Healthcare Chartbook, please visit www.commcorp.org.

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