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PATRICK ADMINISTRATION CALLS ON EMPLOYERS TO HIRE YOUTH

BOSTON—June 26, 2007—Governor Deval Patrick is calling on private sector and non-profit employers to consider hiring a youth in their community for the summer through YouthWorks. The state-funded summer jobs initiative is working to provide 2,500 jobs to youth ages 14-21 in 22 cities across the Commonwealth, including Worcester.

The call comes as the supply of available job opportunities outstrips demand as well as a continuing decline in teen labor force participation. Governor Patrick is urging employers to call the new toll-free hotline that has been established, (866) 968-8461, to connect with youth in need of employment.

“By giving our children the opportunity to work during the summer months, we are providing them with the chance to learn the skills that will help them in the world beyond the classroom,” said Governor Patrick. “Investing in YouthWorks is a win-win proposition for employers and youth across the Commonwealth.”

In Worcester, there is a current waiting list of about 130 youth, a number expected to grow. There are 2,000 income-eligible youth in Worcester, and despite increased state funding for YouthWorks, only about half of that number will be served.

Assistant City Manager for the City of Worcester Julie A. Jacobson has said that they currently have 70 employers supporting summer jobs either with job opportunities or financial support. “Recognizing that today’s youth will shape tomorrow’s labor force, the City of Worcester has clearly identified youth employment opportunities as a priority. With leadership from the Patrick Administration, Commonwealth Corporation, the Worcester City Council and with active participation from local community and business leaders, we can collectively strive to maximize available funding by encouraging local businesses to provide summer employment opportunities for neighborhood youth.”

The Central Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board works with the City to match youth with opportunities. Stephen R. Willand, Ph.D. said, "I am so appreciative of the support that Governor Patrick and his administration have offered for summer jobs programs here in Worcester. It is time now for members of our local business community to join their fellow employers like St. Vincent's Hospital, Hanover Insurance Company, and UMass Memorial Medical Center in providing jobs to the youth in their neighborhoods."

Statewide, the percentage of teens in the labor force has declined dramatically from 57% in 1999 to only 44% in 2006. The employment rate of teens declined from 53% in 1999 to 39% in 2004. These changes are even larger for the state's larger cities, and among low-income families. Jobs are important for teens, as data shows that a lack of work experience will hamper future employability and wage growth--especially for youth who do not go on to college after finishing high school.

"We know that there has been a decline in the labor force participation rate among teens. While there is no quick fix, YouthWorks provides a good starting point," said Suzanne M. Bump, Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development. "Employer involvement is absolutely vital to the success of our summer jobs programs here in Worcester and across Massachusetts."

For further information, visit www.commcorp.org.

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