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New Report Shows Drop in Teen Employment

According to a new report released by Commonwealth Corporation, based on research done by Northeastern University's Center for Labor Market Studies, the labor market fortunes of teenagers both in Massachusetts and nationally have deteriorated considerably since the labor market boom that ended in 2000.

At the time of the 2000 Census, just under 40% of all 16-19 year old high school students across the state were employed, but by 2004, the employment rate had declined to 32% – a larger drop than that seen by any other age group during that period.

Employment rates for Massachusetts high school students were even lower for black students (20%), Hispanics (17%) and those living in poor and low-income households, meaning that those students in greatest need of work experience during the high school years were actually the least likely to obtain it in the past few years.

While the employment rates for Massachusetts residents was better than the national average for teens that are in high school, in the case of high school dropouts, Massachusetts teens have lower employment rates than their national counterparts.

Teens who work while in high school frequently benefit economically from their early work experience, acquiring skills that increase their employability and earnings into their adult years. However they face increased supply competition for available jobs in retail, leisure and hospitality and service industries from new immigrants and older workers.

Jonathan Raymond, President of Commonwealth Corporation, said of the findings, "Education is clearly critical to success in our competitive economy, but a great deal of learning also must take place outside the classroom. Investment in programs that connect high school students to jobs and internships gives students a competitive edge, but also benefit our businesses and economy, providing them with the skilled workers they need."

To see the full report please visit www.commcorp.org/researchandevaluation/briefs.html

Commonwealth Corporation is a quasi-public organization that seeks to increase the prosperity of workers in Massachusetts, while making businesses more competitive through education and workforce development. Commonwealth Corporation receives financial support from the Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development.

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