

October 2026 Franklin County Technical School Advocacy Letter

Subject: Urgent Request for Supplemental Capital Funding and MSBA Formula Reform for the Franklin County Technical School

Dear Governor Healey, MSBA Leadership, and Esteemed Members of the Western Massachusetts Delegation:

We, the undersigned municipal leaders representing member communities of the Franklin County Technical School (FCTS) district, write to you with a unified voice regarding a looming fiscal crisis.

Our region is incredibly proud of FCTS and its role in producing the highly skilled workforce that drives the Commonwealth's economy, green energy transition, and local trades. However, the current financial model for the \$236.6 million FCTS building project threatens to overwhelm our taxpayers. While the MSBA has assigned our district a nominal reimbursement rate of 66.27%, the actual state contribution will only cover approximately 48% of the total project.

This discrepancy leaves Greenfield and our 18 rural partner communities shouldering an unsustainable \$122.8 million local debt burden. A primary driver of this multi-million-dollar gap is the structure of the MSBA's funding formula.

Specifically, its gross-square-footage allowances and rigid construction cost caps as applied to vocational-technical schools.

Current MSBA space guidelines and gross-square-footage allowances fail to recognize the realities of delivering mandated Chapter 74 vocational-technical education. While the MSBA provides minor spatial adjustments for tech schools compared to traditional academic high schools, these allowances fall short of what is actually required to build modern, safe, and code-compliant industrial shops.

Programs like automotive technology, carpentry, welding, and advanced manufacturing require massive footprints, high-bay ceilings, heavy equipment clearances, specialized industrial exhaust systems, and wide utility corridors. When the MSBA applies its standard net-to-gross ratios and strict gross-square-footage caps, it inevitably categorizes necessary vocational space as "excessive" or "ineligible" for State reimbursement.

Consequently, our municipalities, which make up the poorest county in Massachusetts, shoulder a disproportionate burden when building the specialized facilities required to meet the Commonwealth's workforce development goals.

Further, the MSBA per-square-foot construction cost caps do not reflect today's inflated costs. When the MSBA caps reimbursements at rates below actual market bids, the overage falls to municipalities.

The 19 communities of Franklin County do not have the deep tax bases required to absorb these overages. To fund this \$122.8 million local share, our towns will be forced into debt exclusions and Proposition 2 ½ overrides, which will inevitably lead to cuts in critical municipal services, public safety, and our local K-12 school districts.

We cannot train the workforce of tomorrow using a funding formula from the past. We urgently request the following actions:

- Supplemental Capital Funding: We ask the Legislature to make the FCTS project possible by appropriating supplemental capital aid to account for the higher costs of technical school construction, construction cost inflation, and our region's economic reality.
- Gross-Square-Footage Allowance Reform: We urge the MSBA and the Legislature to revise 963 CMR 2.00 space guidelines and Module 3 space summaries to accurately reflect the true Gross Square Footage demands of

modern Chapter 74 vocational programs, ensuring these spaces are eligible for adequate reimbursement.

- Index Construction Caps: We call for legislation to automatically tie MSBA per-square-foot construction reimbursement caps to real-time, regional construction inflation indices.

We stand ready to partner with you to ensure the Franklin County Technical School remains a beacon of opportunity without forcing untenable cuts elsewhere in the communities that support it. We respectfully request a meeting with our delegation and MSBA representatives to discuss targeted relief for this project.

Sincerely,

Lora Wondolowski
Greenfield City Council President