

A photograph of the Boston skyline at night, with numerous skyscrapers and buildings illuminated with warm yellow and orange lights. The lights are reflected in the water in the foreground. The sky is a mix of blue and orange, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall scene is vibrant and urban.

# BECMA

**BLACK ECONOMIC COUNCIL**  
*of* MASSACHUSETTS

# 2024

# BECMA'S LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

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## Legislative Agenda for 2024

In 2015, the Boston Fed released its “Color of Wealth” study, which found that the average net worth of Black Boston households was \$8 compared to that of White Boston households at almost \$250,000. Later that year in response to the study, Black business leaders founded the Black Economic Council of Massachusetts (BECMA) to build Black wealth in the Commonwealth. BECMA’s work is grounded in four pillars:



- **Entrepreneurship** - supporting existing and new businesses with grants and resources to grow and sustain their workforce and operations;



- **Placement** - increasing participation on boards and commissions throughout the commonwealth;



- **Commerce** - connecting our small businesses to contracting opportunities and anchor institutions; and



- **Ownership** - supporting home and business ownership throughout the Black community

BECMA’s mission is to drive economic equity and prosperity for Massachusetts to achieve inclusive growth through advocacy, programming, and strategic partnerships that enable Black-owned businesses and Black communities to thrive.

BECMA is a minority-owned, member based non-profit serving businesses across the Commonwealth. BECMA supported 429 businesses in 2023, spent \$153,000 in technical assistance and professional services, \$28,000 in digital tools, and \$607,000 in grants to businesses. BECMA sits on several Boards and Commissions. Most recently, BECMA President & CEO Nicole Obi was named as the Chairwoman of the Supplier Diversity and Small Business Association Advisory Board, appointed to Governor Maura Healey’s Housing Advisory Council, appointed to Governor Maura Healey’s MassHire State Workforce Board, appointed to the Board of Trustees for the New England Aquarium, and is an active member of The Boston Foundation’s Partnership to Close the Racial Wealth Gap.

BECMA is an active member of ~11 coalitions such as, Wage Equity Now, Coalition for an Equitable Economy, Parity on Board Coalition, Justice40 Working Group, New England Association of Offshore Wind, and more!



BECMA believes that we can build generational wealth and create thriving communities for Black residents and all Massachusetts residents through supporting legislation that centers access to equitable opportunities across industry, sector, and community. In alignment with BECMA's four pillars, our Legislative Agenda focuses on the following priority areas:



## • **Supporting Small Businesses and Economic Development**

- *FY25 Budget*
- *Economic Development Bond Bill*
- H.1157/S.1999, An Act addressing the racial wealth gap
- H.998/S.624, An Act to encourage retirement planning
- H.3741/S.2380, An Act Authorizing Additional Licenses for the Sale of Alcoholic Beverages
- H.1023/S.628, An Act to promote economic mobility through matched savings



## • **Creating Equitable Opportunities for Homeownership**

- H.4138, The Affordable Homes Act (Housing Bond Bill)
- H.1379/S.858, An Act to Promote Yes in My Back Yard
- S.866/H.1377, An Act to establish an Office of Fair Housing and a Fair Housing Trust Fund



## • **Strengthening Environmental Justice**

- H.3218, An Act to promote transportation electrification infrastructure
- H.3187/S.2113, An Act relative to energy facilities siting improvement to address environmental justice, climate, and public health
- H.3392/ S.2217, An Act Setting Deadlines to Electrify the Commuter Rail
- H.3139 /S.2218, An Act setting deadlines for school bus and public fleet electrification, and programs to encourage electrification of private fleets



## • **Supporting Healthy Workplaces**

- H.4109/S.2484, The Frances Perkins Act
- H.1882/S.1170, An Act to establish psychological workplace safety
- S.1973, An Act relative to diversity, equity, and inclusion



- **Expanding the Care Economy**

- H.489/S.301, An Act providing affordable and accessible high-quality early education
- H.649/S.380, An Act to improve Massachusetts home care
- S.755/H.1195, An Act clarifying rate setting processes for home health and home care services
- H.4193, An Act to improve quality and oversight of long-term care
- S.2527, An Act relative to assisted living and basic health services



- **Secondary Priorities**

- H.3095/S.2029, An Act to promote diversity on public boards and commissions
- H.1710/S.942, An Act to promote public safety and better outcomes for young adults
- H.3913, An Act relative to missing Black women and girls in Massachusetts
- H.2416, An Act requiring human trafficking recognition training for certain hospitality workers
- H.3956/S.1545, An Act creating an independent correctional oversight office to facilitate the recommendations of the Special Legislative Commission on Structural Racism in Correctional Facilities of the Commonwealth

**BECMA utilizes the lived experiences of our members and our Membership team, the best available quantitative and qualitative data, a [Racial Equity and Policy Framework shared by The Commonwealth Fund](#), and alignment with our Mission and Pillars to identify policy positions and legislation to support. This is a living document, updated as needed.**

*Join BECMA in supporting our legislative priorities.*

*To learn more or get involved, contact the policy team at [policy@becma.org](mailto:policy@becma.org)*

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## SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

***FY25 Budget:*** BECMA supports capital investments and policies that align with BECMA's four pillars of entrepreneurship, commerce, ownership, and placement such investments and technical assistance for small businesses, workforce development and job training for new and emerging industries, sustainable clean energy efforts that are equitable and environmentally just, and more. The following items are priorities that BECMA strongly supports on behalf of its member base:

- \$20M for Community Empowerment & Reinvestment Grant (7002-2021)
- \$30M for the Mass Clean Energy Center (MassCEC) (1595-6232)
- \$8.8M for the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental affairs to implement an environmental justice strategy and promote and secure environmental justice (2000-0102)
- \$10.1M for climate change adaptation and preparedness (2000-0101)
- \$10M for Small Business Technical Assistance (7002-0040)
- \$4M for Urban Agenda Economic Development Grants (7002-0036)
- \$25M for CDC's, CDFI, Nonprofits Direct Lending and Support (New Line Item)
- \$3M for Microlending including new language (New Line Item)
- \$685k MA Center for Employee Ownership (New Line Item)

### ***Economic Development Bond Bill***

- BECMA supports capital investments and policy provisions that increase opportunities for minority business enterprises and other small businesses, decrease unemployment disparities for Black residents, provide opportunities for diverse businesses to transition into in new and emerging industries, and incorporate concrete equity and inclusion efforts to address long standing inequities to build a prosperous Commonwealth for all.
  - BECMA is committed to advocating for the inclusion of the following elements in the economic development bond bill:
    - Public Construction: A pilot surety bond access program, focused on Black, Hispanic, and LGBTQ-owned businesses. Businesses have to put up 50% of the value of a contract to take it on, this would create a pot of money for Black, Hispanic & LGBTQ to cover this "insurance" and be able to complete projects without large amounts of spare capital.
    - Racial Equity and Policy Framework: to assess bond investments and their impacts for all communities, including explicit goals and commitments for equity.

- Data and metrics: To measure the progress, BECMA supports the creation of a public facing dashboard tracking indicators such as regional economic growth, income inequality, workforce and demographic trends, and other equity-related data.
  - Supporting workforce training and pathways for careers without degrees
  - \$500M for the Massachusetts Life Sciences Breakthrough Fund (7002-0026)
  - \$250M for Mass Impact (7002-8066)
  - \$200M for the Clean Energy Investments Fund (7002-8077)
  - \$200M for the Wind Industry Investment Trust Fund (7002-8078)
  - \$100M for the Local Economic Development Grants (1100-2520)
  - \$90M for the Underutilized Property Program (7002-8062)
  - \$30M for the Brownfields Redevelopment Fund (7002-8053)
  - \$25M for the Business Builds Capital Program (7002-8069)
  - \$25M for Small Business Technology Grants (7002-1522)
  - \$35M for Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) (7002-8046)
  - \$10M for Biz-M-Power (7002-8054)
  - Modifications to the Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP)
  - Life Sciences Tax Incentive Program
  - Climatetech Tax Incentive Program
  - Offshore Wind Tax Incentive Program
  - Small Business Workers Compensation Payment Plans
  - Updates the “microbusinesses” definition to focus on businesses with 10 or fewer employees
  - Adjustments to the existing Workforce Investment Trust Fund
  - Business Front Door
- [H.1157/S.1999](#), “An Act addressing the racial wealth gap”, sponsored by Rep. Vargas and Senator Feeney
    - Summary: Would create a Baby Bonds Trust Fund administered by the Commonwealth. This trust fund would make an investment in the Commonwealth’s most vulnerable children and allow participants starting at the age of 18 to spend those funds, which have grown in the market since they were a child, to invest in a home, their education, or in starting a business.
  - [H.998/S.624](#), “An Act to encourage retirement planning”, sponsored by Rep. Donato and Senator DiDomenico
    - Summary: Would create a state-run retirement plan at no cost to employers, empowering individuals to better prepare for their futures and allowing businesses to better compete in a tight labor market. This plan would complement, not compete with the private market and allow Black led businesses and small businesses to better recruit and retain employees while providing family sustaining work opportunities.
  - [H.3741/S.2380](#), “An Act Authorizing Additional Licenses for the Sale of Alcoholic Beverages”, sponsored by Sen Miranda and Rep Chris Worrell

- Summary: Would create restricted, non-transferable liquor licenses for the 10 ZIP Codes that currently have the least access, which is crucial to not only help diversify the industry, but also make real progress in closing the racial wealth gap in Boston's hospitality industry.
- **H.1023/S.628** "An Act to promote economic mobility through matched savings," sponsored by Sen. James B. Eldridge, Rep. Gentile, and Rep. Samantha Montaño
  - Summary: Would create Matched Savings Accounts for eligible individuals who work with a community-based organization to create a savings plan after receiving financial education, counseling, and asset-specific training. Individuals participating in a Matched Savings program would receive a 4:1 match which allows them to save up to \$20,000. These savings could be used on the purchase of a home, education, job training, opening a small business, and more. This bill would also create a Matched Savings Trust Fund, administered by the secretary of housing and economic development.



## CREATING EQUITABLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR HOMEOWNERSHIP

- **H.4138**, The Affordable Homes Act (Housing Bond Bill)
  - Summary: Would provide mechanisms and resources to address major challenges Massachusetts faces in its ongoing housing crisis, such as providing capital investment, increasing the housing stock, changing archaic zoning rules, making way for the creation of affordable housing, increasing down payment assistance, and more. BECMA strongly supports the following policy provisions and capital investments:
    - The Affordable Housing Trust Fund; MassDREAMS
    - Office of Fair Housing and the Fair Housing Trust Fund
    - Statewide Housing Plan
    - Commonwealth Builder Program
    - Inclusionary Zoning by Simple Majority
    - Accessory Dwelling Units
    - Sustainable and Green Housing Initiatives
    - Momentum Fund
    - Local Option Transfer Fee
    - Housing Stabilization and Investment Fund
    - Proposed Amendment: The Commission for Racial Equity in Housing
      - This Commission will bring together policymakers, leaders, and those most impacted by racial disparities to monitor diversity, inclusion, workforce, and business enterprise goals in addition to recommending policies, programs, practices, and investments to remove barriers and

close racial disparities in housing access, neighborhood investment, employment, procurement, wealth and asset building, and business resiliency.

- Additionally, BECMA advocates for the inclusion of the STASH program into the Housing Bond Bill. STASH is a first in the nation matched savings program for first-generation first-time homebuyers and has helped more than 100 first-generation homebuyers become homeowners. To learn more, check out MAHA or the Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance.
- **H.1379/S.858**, “An Act to Promote Yes in My Back Yard”, sponsored by Sen. Crighton and Reps. Vargas and Honan.
  - **Summary:** Would amend zoning law to facilitate the production of mixed-use development and multifamily housing that require certain percentages of housing for low-income persons. This bill also amends zoning law to facilitate the production of accessory dwelling units. Finally, it would promote the reuse of vacant commercial properties for residential and mixed-use housing by requiring the commissioner of capital asset management and maintenance to determine, prior to disposition of real property, whether such property shall be made available for low or moderate income housing.
- **S.866/H.1377**, An Act to establish an Office of Fair Housing and a Fair Housing Trust Fund sponsored by Sen. Lydia Edwards, Rep. Chynah Tyler, and Rep. David Rodgers
  - **Summary:** Would create an Office of Fair Housing to enforce and maintain compliance with all fair housing laws while eliminating discrimination and cultivating inclusive communities. The Office would develop an annual report that would evaluate progress made to eliminate housing discrimination across the state to a regional level and detail the activities and outcomes of the Fair Housing Trust Fund. The Fair Housing Trust Fund’s eligible activities include private enforcement initiatives, education and outreach initiatives, fair housing testing, lending discrimination, affirmatively furthering fair housing, and special projects.



## STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

- ***EJ priority items we support:***

BECMA is committed to help transition existing firms into the clean energy space, as well as create new employer firms and expand existing ones. Complementing the work of BECMA’s state-wide Electric Vehicle Kickstarter program and Electric



Vehicle Supply Equipment (EVSE) initiatives, the BECMA policy team advocates for the inclusion of Black businesses in the emerging climate economy.

Inclusion in the green transition is not just about economic justice, it is also about environmental justice. The Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC)'s Clean Energy Workforce Needs Assessment found that "to meet our 2030 greenhouse gas emission reduction targets, the Massachusetts clean energy workforce will need to grow by an additional 29,700 full-time equivalent workers, which will require 38,100 workers to be trained and ready to deploy some or all of their time on climate-critical work." Transitioning Black firms and workers is critical to meeting our climate goals.

In addition to our support for Black business and workers in the climate space, BECMA is committed to advocating to ensure that the burdens and benefits of green transitions are equitably distributed. In support of these priorities, BECMA advocates for the inclusion of the following elements in climate bills and state initiatives:

- Investing in the necessary infrastructure and workforce, particularly around offshore wind, electric vehicles, and energy efficiency
    - We would like to see significant investment in the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC)
  - A focus on Environmental Justice (EJ) communities
  - Improving the Siting & Permitting process to ensure stakeholder engagement, that community impact is considered, and standardizing community benefits.
- [H.3218](#) "An Act to promote transportation electrification infrastructure," sponsored by Rep. Jeffrey Roy
  - Summary: Comprehensive "minibus" bill with provisions relating to EV infrastructure, building decarbonization (including goals for schools), environmental justice & equity, and grid modernization.
- [H.3187/S.2113](#), "An Act relative to energy facilities siting improvement to address environmental justice, climate, and public health," sponsored by Rep. Adrian Madaro
  - Summary: Would add EJ, public health, and climate to the Siting Board's responsibilities, Require community engagement prior to filing for environmental or Siting Board review of a petition to construct a generating facility or an oil, gas, or substation facility, Require a cumulative impact assessment and an EJ impact statement before approval of any electricity generating facility or oil, gas, or substation facility, Prohibit the approval of electricity generating facilities or substations if the EJ impact statement shows that they will result in cumulative climate, public health, or other harms to EJ populations that are higher than harms borne by other communities, Lower the thresholds for what projects are subject to Siting Board review from 100 megawatts to 35 megawatts. Require Siting Board to set timelines for review that are expedited for solar, wind, and geothermal.

- [H.3392/ S.2217](#), “An Act Setting Deadlines to Electrify the Commuter Rail,” sponsored by Rep. Owens, Rep. Armini, Sen. Crighton
  - [Summary](#): Would require the MBTA to operate a fully electric commuter rail system by 2035, prioritizing the electrification of lines serving environmental justice populations, and require regional rail frequent service, with specific frequency targets for each line on a phased schedule between 2029 and 2035.
- [H.3139 /S.2218](#), “An Act setting deadlines for school bus and public fleet electrification, and programs to encourage electrification of private fleets,” sponsored by Rep. Barber, Rep. Meschino, Sen. Crighton
  - [Summary](#): Would require that all school buses and publicly-owned and leased vehicle fleets – from public works cars to school buses and garbage and recycling trucks – be electric by 2035, prioritizing deployment of public electric vehicle (EV) fleets to locations serving EJ populations. Would require state employees to work together on a plan to support the transition of public and private fleets to EV including through the creation of an incentive program for private fleets implemented by the Department of Energy Resources to encourage conversion of private fleets to EVs. This will include incentives for electrifying freight transportation, taxis, and limousines.



## SUPPORTING HEALTHY WORKPLACES

- [H.4109/S.2484](#), “The Frances Perkins Act,” sponsored by Rep. Josh Cutler and Rep. Brandy Fluker Oakley
  - [Summary](#): Would mandate that employers disclose salary ranges in job postings and that data is collected to help identify aggregate gender and racial leadership gaps within business sectors.
- [H.1882/S.1170](#), “An Act to establish psychological workplace safety,” sponsored by Rep. Jessica Giannino and Sen Paul Feeney
  - [Summary](#): Would hold employers accountable for psychological abuse and toxic work environments and expand protections for all workers regardless of protected class status.
- [S.1973](#), “An Act relative to diversity, equity, and inclusion,” sponsored by Sen. Nick Collins, Rep. Chynah Tyler, and Rep. Worrell

- Summary: Would require every state and quasi-state agency to establish and maintain a senior-level position which shall have the title of director of diversity, equity, and inclusion.



## EXPANDING THE CARE ECONOMY

- **FY25 Budget**

- \$475M for Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) grants to providers to stabilize the early education and care system (3000-1045)
- \$21M for the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (CPPI) starting with Gateway Cities (1596-2412)
- \$10M for EEC Provider Higher Education Opportunities to create career pathways program for early educators (3000-7066)
- \$75M for the Childcare Affordability Initiative (1596-2435)
- \$65M for Early Education and Care financial assistance rate increases (1596-2434)
- \$11.3M for Supportive Senior Housing Program to increase the number of sites (9110-1604)
- \$26.3M for Grants to Councils on Aging (COA), expanding the COA formula grants from \$12 to \$14 per older adult (9110-9002)

- **H.489/S.301**, “An Act providing affordable and accessible high-quality early education and care to promote child development and well-being and support the economy in the Commonwealth,” sponsored by Reps. Madaro & Gordon & Sens. Lewis & Moran

- Summary: Would direct the state Department of Early Education and Care to set fees for eligible families that are affordable, provide financial assistance to enable more families to afford and access high-quality early education, prioritizing families earning at or below 85% of state median income and, as federal funding becomes available, extending eligibility to middle-income families, and permanently establish a direct-to-provider funding allocation based on provider capacity (not attendance) that directly offsets provider operating costs, including higher educator pay – similar to the Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) program.

- **H.649/S.380**, “An Act to improve Massachusetts home care,” sponsored by Rep. Thomas Stanley, Rep. Michael Moran, and Sen. Patricia Jehlen

- Summary: Would create state regulations that include licensing home care agencies, background checks for all home care workers, new training competencies and requirements, safe working conditions policies, minimum coverage for workers’

compensation, maintenance of a payroll process, maintenance of an emergency preparedness plan, quality metrics and standards for licensing, and adequate equipment for home care workers.

- **S.755/H.1195**, “An Act clarifying rate setting processes for home health and home care services,” sponsored by Sen. Patricia Jehlen and Rep. Carmine Gentile
  - **Summary**: Amends **GL 118E:13D** (duties of ratemaking authority) by requiring rates for home health agencies to be set at least biennially; requires use of calendar year reported costs no more than 4 years old in determining such rates; mandates inclusion of information regarding costs incurred by providers, reasonable administrative expenses and profits; details sources of cost information; further directs the department of elder affairs to consider changes to minimum wages, change to employer payroll tax obligations, and other wage and rate information in determining such rates; requires the department to submit data on rate determination to the committees on Ways and Means.
  
- **H.4193**, “An Act to improve quality and oversight of long-term care”, sponsored by Joint Committee on Elder Affairs
  - **Summary**: This omnibus legislation relative to long-term care facilities seeks to improve the situation in long-term care facilities, and issues related to prior authorization, including by
    - Establishes a Long-Term Care Workforce and Capital Fund to be administered by EOHHS for the purpose of supporting a capital loan program for skilled nursing facilities, and several workforce training programs;
    - Substantially overhauls the licensure process for the operation of long term care facilities;
    - Directs DPH to promulgate regulations governing the operation of small house nursing homes;
    - Strengthens the oversight of long term care facilities in the Commonwealth, granting DPH increased authority to impose remedies or sanctions on facilities that fail to provide adequate care;
    - Requires every long-term care facility to develop an outbreak response plan which is to be customized to the long-term care facility;
    - Requires DOI to use as base year costs for rate determination purposes in establishing Medicaid rates for skilled nursing facilities, with the reported costs of the calendar year not more than 2 years prior to the current rate year;
    - Requires DOI to develop and implement a uniform prior authorization form for the admission of patients from an acute care hospital to a post-acute care facility, or transitioned to a home health agency, for covered post-acute care services;



- Requires all payers to approve or deny a request for prior authorization for admission to a post-acute care facility for any inpatient requiring covered post-acute care services by the next business day;
  - Establishes and regulates several studies and task forces on issues related to long term care.
- [S.2527](#), “An Act relative to assisted living and basic health services”, sponsored by the Joint Committee on Elder Affairs
  - Summary: Would update reporting and transparency requirements and ensure patient safety and clinical compliance.



## SECONDARY PRIORITIES

- [H.3095/S.2029](#), “An Act to promote diversity on public boards and commissions,” sponsored by Rep. Tram Nguyen and Sen Liz Miranda
  - Summary: Would require that every appointive board or commission must strive for at least 50% of its membership to identify as female and at least 30% of its membership to identify as an under-represented minority or LGBTQ+; amends said percentages as needed to reflect future census data; and directs each public board and commission to annually report its membership statistics.
- [H.1710/S.942](#), “An Act to promote public safety and better outcomes for young adults,” sponsored by Rep. James O’Day and Sen Brendan Crighton
  - Summary: Would keep 18 – 20 year-olds in the juvenile system where they will have increased access to diversion, record protections, educational and rehabilitative programming, lowering recidivism.
- [H.3913](#), “An Act relative to missing Black women and girls in Massachusetts,” sponsored by Rep. Bud Williams
  - Summary: Would establish an executive office for missing Black women and girls, create an “Ebony Alert” notification system, orchestrate communication between relevant agencies during investigations, and ensure data-driven and evidence-based recommendations are shared amongst decision makers to ensure all are safe and protected in our Commonwealth.
- [H.2416](#), “An Act requiring human trafficking recognition training for certain hospitality workers,” sponsored by Rep. Walsh and Sen. Lovely

- Summary: Would establish a human trafficking recognition training program where employees at hotels, motels, lodging houses, and bed and breakfasts learn about the nature of human trafficking, how to identify victims of human trafficking, have awareness of available resources for victims, and resources for survivors. The human trafficking training program would be approved by the attorney general, and each qualified accommodation listed above would have a written notice from the attorney general posted in their establishment that includes the national human trafficking hotline.
- H.3956/S.1545, “An Act creating an independent correctional oversight office to facilitate the recommendations of the Special Legislative Commission on Structural Racism in Correctional Facilities of the Commonwealth,” sponsored by Chairman Bud Williams and Sen. Liz Miranda
  - Summary: Would establish an independent correctional oversight office to facilitate the recommendations of the Special Legislative Commission on Structural Racism in Correctional Facilities of the Commonwealth. In particular, the legislation cites various findings from the Special Legislative Commission on Structural Racism in Correctional Facilities of the Commonwealth, and cites various recommendations of that Commission, including establishing an anti-racism division within the Office of Inspector General.