

Berkshire Eagle – May 26, 2026

Letters To Editor

Letter: A summer job can change a life — and strengthen our economy

To the editor: Massachusetts is home to leading industries like health care, technology and advanced manufacturing that drive regional economies and strengthen prosperity statewide.

For young people, early exposure to these fields can spark curiosity, build confidence and develop the hands-on and soft skills employers need. Expanding summer job opportunities through partnerships with employers is one of the best ways to prepare the next-generation workforce.

Fortunately, many employers across Berkshire County and Massachusetts are already opening their doors to young workers. Now, the opportunity is to build on those efforts so more youth can gain meaningful work experience, professional networks and skills that last a lifetime.

Massachusetts has long invested in YouthWorks, a program that provides subsidized wages for young people working at community-based organizations and seasonal employers. Since 2023, more than 13,000 young people have gained employment, and the Healey-Driscoll administration recently announced a \$14.4 million investment to support nearly 3,800 additional youth this summer. Most participants are between 14 and 17 years old and receive valuable training in leadership, project management and customer service.

These programs benefit more than young people. Employers can fill critical summer labor gaps, strengthen future talent pipelines and provide

leadership opportunities for supervisors. Communities also benefit through stronger local economies, increased household income and reductions in youth violence.

To expand this impact, the Healey-Driscoll administration, MassHire and local leaders are connecting employers with job-ready youth through a summer jobs pilot in Gateway cities. In Berkshire County, MassHire is partnering with local governments and 15 regional employers to place young adults in hospitality, tourism and trades jobs this summer. These sectors offer entry-level opportunities with clear career pathways while helping employers build a sustainable future workforce.

As we navigate economic headwinds, it is encouraging to build these local partnerships to demonstrate to more employers in the region that increased employer engagement and partnership will yield long-term results – for our future workforce, employers and the greater community. Over the past several months, we have participated in learning communities with local partners, capturing best practices across all participating regions that will culminate in a blueprint this region can continue to apply to scale this approach beyond summer 2026.

Just as our industries continue to innovate, now is the time to create new strategies to invest in our future talent.

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The writer is the Berkshire director of MassHire.