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# State awards Holyoke Community College \$1.46 million

HOLYOKE – Holyoke Community College and its partners have been awarded a state grant worth nearly \$1.46 million to create a CNA to LPN training program to help area hospitals meet their workforce needs.

Earlier this month, the Healey-Driscoll Administration announced a total of \$3.9 million in Senator Kenneth J. Donnelly Workforce Success grants for six initiatives representing employers and collaborative organizations across the Commonwealth.

The lion's share of that money - \$1,457,143 - will go to an HCC led training program to assist 86 unemployed or underemployed individuals transition from jobs as nursing aides to positions as licensed practical nurses.

The grants, funded through the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund and distributed by the Commonwealth Corporation, aim to increase sustainable wage career pathways for Massachusetts residents facing employ-

ment barriers and improve the competitiveness of Massachusetts businesses by enhancing worker skills and productivity.

HCC's partners in the grant include Baystate Medical Center, Baystate Wing Hospital, MassHire Hampden County, Springfield Works, and the National Fund for Workforce Solutions.

"We are delighted about the Commonwealth Corporation's award to HCC and our many partners in this unique and innovative career pathway in nursing," said HCC President George Timmons. "Healthcare is one of the largest industry sectors in our region, and it continues to grow. We hope that this pathway for licensed practical nurses will help create more family sustainable incomes for nursing assistants looking to advance in this exciting and rewarding career."

The multi-stage program will first train individuals as nursing aides, then help them obtain jobs at area hospitals while they continue their training in HCC's LPN program, all the while

providing them with wrap-around support services. HCC already has an existing framework for CNA training through its Jump Start program, which is designed for individuals receiving public assistance.

The grants were announced Dec. 18 by Labor and Workforce Development Secretary Lauren Jones during a graduation event at the Boston-area African Bridge Network, which received \$498,655.

To help leverage the state grant for the HCC-led project, the National Fund for Workforce Solutions invested \$200,000 to incorporate the voices and lived experiences of participants in the design of the program to advance equitable employment outcomes.

"This is an amazing achievement," said Anne Kandilis, director of Springfield WORKS/Working Cities Challenge. "Sometimes we focus on the grant itself, but the 18 months of hard collaborative work that goes into proposing something this big is important to lift up too."

According to the Healey-Driscoll Administration, the grants are part of a strategic investment in the Massachusetts workforce to develop programs that support individuals facing barriers to employment, such as lack of formal schooling, language literacy, or past involvement with the criminal justice system.

The six grant-funded initiatives aim to train and hire 384 individuals over three years. The Springfield-based Entrepreneurial & Business Collaborative also received a grant worth \$630,998 to prepare 90 individuals for jobs in the hospitality industry. The group is partnering with the Northampton Brewery, Granny's Baking Table, River Valley Market, Tandem Bagel Company, and Puerto Rico Bakery II.

Other grant recipients include the Training and Upgrading Fund in Quincy (\$717,220), Cambridge College, Inc., in Boston (\$436,062), and Cape Cod Regional Technical High School District in Harwich (\$225,425).