

Healey kicks off competitiveness council to address headwinds facing the state

By [Jon Chesto](#) Globe Staff, Updated December 3, 2025, 3:57 p.m.



Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey is convening what she's calling the Massachusetts Competitive Council, which met for the first time on Wednesday at the State House. JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

Governor Maura Healey knows the stats. Massachusetts [job growth has been essentially flat](#) since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, lagging most of the country. The [exodus of residents](#) to other, lower-cost states remains sizable. And the federal funding that underpins much of the [state's research economy is under threat](#) by the White House.

Those are three big reasons why Healey is [convening what she's calling the Massachusetts Competitive Council](#), which met for the first time on Wednesday at the State House. She created the group earlier this fall, to bring together 20-plus leaders from various business and labor-backed groups who could advise her on policies to spur job growth, tamp down domestic out-migration, and support local businesses. The group is being cochaired by Harpoon Brewery cofounder Dan Kenary and former Bain Capital executive Mark Nunnally.

Healey told the group on Wednesday that they have “an opportunity to take a look at what we can do to make sure we’re putting ourselves in the best position” to win jobs, talent, companies, and private-sector investments. She rattled off accomplishments along those lines in her first term, including a tax reform bill that was the state’s “first tax cut in 20 years” and policy changes that are spurring housing construction. But so much more, she said, needs to be done.

“This is not a time for any of us to be complacent,” Healey told the council. “We’re mindful of what’s happening, not just in other states, but in other countries right now.”

Healey, a Democrat, is gearing up for a reelection fight next year; three prominent Republican candidates are angling for the opportunity to run against her.

Competitiveness will most likely be a key issue in the campaign, as will related affordability issues. The council is expected to deliberate throughout 2026, to come up with recommendations by the end of next year, potentially after the November election, though Healey hopes some ideas will emerge sooner.

It’s not yet clear whether the council’s findings will lead to legislation, regulations, business incentives, or other state government actions; Healey says she’s open to all. Healey’s new economic development secretary, former venture capitalist Eric Paley, will be her key point person on the council, though others from her administration will participate as well.

“We stand at a really important juncture right now,” said Nunnelly, a former top aide to Governor Charlie Baker.

Council members suggested several ideas to focus on, such as spurring construction of more homes for middle-class households, addressing the state’s expensive unemployment insurance system, and persuading more students who come here for college to stay after they graduate.

Phineas Baxandall, policy director at the left-leaning MassBudget think tank, stressed the importance of state government investments, particularly in education and transportation. Massachusetts, he said, won’t be able to gain a competitive edge by being less expensive than, say, Mississippi or Vietnam.

From Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce chief executive Jim Rooney’s perspective, the state still lacks a strong economic growth strategy — something he hopes the council can change.

“I hope this marks the beginning of our journey out of ‘competitiveness complacency,’” Rooney told the council members, “[and] into a real sense of urgency.”

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