

AIM blasts Romney for veto of MassMEP funds

Sheri Qualters Boston Business Journal
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The state's largest trade group, the Associated Industries of Massachusetts, has sent a letter to State House officials to protest Gov. Mitt Romney's veto of funding for the Massachusetts Manufacturing Extension Partnership.

The organization, which helps small manufacturers streamline operations, trim costs and retain or create jobs, typically gets about \$850,000 of its \$6 million budget from state funding. The state funds are matched with \$2.3 million in federal funds from the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Institute of Standards and Technology.

NIST usually requires a one-third contribution from the state, but MassMEP's director Jack Healy recently told the Boston Business Journal that the state has not met this goal for several years.

In a letter addressed to House Speaker Salvatore F. DiMasi, Boston-based AIM asked the legislature to restore the funding. In a separate interview, AIM President and CEO Richard Lord said the program is particularly good for the competitive environment faced by small and midsize manufacturers.

"It provides them with resources to help them adopt lean manufacturing practices and improve productivity," Lord said.

MassMEP supporter and State Sen. Ed Augustus Jr. (D-Worcester) said he's disappointed by the governor's short-sighted veto, but optimistic that the legislature will restore the funding.

The governor's office did not return calls for comment for this story.

An independent survey of MassMEP determined that the organization's clients reported \$17.2 million in cost savings, creation or retention of 784 jobs, increased or retained sales of \$108 million and new investments of \$18 million.

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