



Remarks to the Third Annual MassResults Conference

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Public Service. Let me begin by thanking you for your public service. In a world where government-bashing is an all-too-common sport and where the voices of blame-throwers tend to overwhelm those who understand and appreciate the many ways government enhances the quality of their lives, it is not easy being a public servant. So to those of you in this room who work for government, let me say thank you for choosing this essential, important, under-appreciated line of work. And to those of you who work with government to help it deliver smarter, thank you, as well, for understanding how important it is to have a highly functioning government.

Universities. On that last point, let me also extend kudos to UMass Boston, with a shout out to the McCormack School and the Collins Center, for hosting this event and for recognizing that universities can and should play a strong role helping governments improve how well they deliver.

The Volcker Alliance. Next, let me just say a few words about myself and the Volcker Alliance. One year ago, former Federal Reserve Chairmen Paul Volcker launched the Volcker Alliance to catalyze more attention and action to bring about more effective, trusted government. As its President and a self-confessed evangelist for the power of using goals and measurement to improve outcomes and raise return on taxpayer investment and to reduce frustration with government, I could not resist the temptation to join you today.

Progress on Priorities. Let me begin by saying “wow.” If you haven’t yet, take a look at the impressive record on the poster displays around the room.¹ They speak for themselves:

- Greenhouse gases are not just steadily declining but show a steep acceleration in the rate of decline in the last ten years following increases in the previous twenty.
- 10th grade English scores are not just improving, but the achievement gap is also getting smaller.
- Municipalities are saving tens of millions of dollars in health care costs.
- Youth violence is way down.
- I am particularly interested in learning about the sharp increase in on-line renewals at the RMV that began about six months ago, which is making people’s lives easier and saving money. I am anxious to learn what you did and if there are lessons for others

¹ See pages 7-17 for the visualizations prepared by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Administration and Finance for the Third Annual MassResults Conference.

What these posters tell me is that your hard work is moving the Commonwealth forward. They also remind all of us that government can and does make a difference.

MassResults. The work of Massachusetts' government, under MassGoals and its successor MassResults, has contributed to this progress, as have fruitful partnerships with universities, other levels of government, the non-profit world and businesses. At a minimum, the plans and reports the Governor mandated with [Executive Order 540](#) make it easier to see the areas where agencies are focusing their efforts, the goals you selected, the strategies you are pursuing, where you are making progress, and where you are having problems.

But MassResults and its predecessor efforts seem to be doing much more than that. I hope that it has increased access to information not just for the governor, Cabinet Secretaries and central office but also for front-line workers and delivery partners and everyone in between. I hope that the information enables everyone to think more carefully about what all of you are trying to accomplish, how, how well, and whether or not you should stay the course or adjust your actions.

If you are not already using your goals and data this way, packaged to meet the distinct needs of different audiences, I urge you to start doing so to stimulate conversations with everyone in the delivery chain about what is working, what needs adjusting, and how to do better.

Last time I spoke here with many of you, I talked about the power of an ambitious goal, paired with temporally and geographically frequent data, to clean up the Charles River. Fresh, frequent data -- monthly sampling done at 37 points along the 80-mile stretch of the river -- greatly improved the water quality of the Charles by leading to the discovery of illegal hook-ups to storm sewers that would not have been found had the agency stuck to its standard operating procedures of rule-writing, permit issuance, inspection of permit holders, and enforcement against those whom inspectors had identified as being in violation.

I would love to hear your equivalent stories.

The bottom line is that managing with goals, measurement, and analysis works remarkably well when data, analyses, and lessons learned are regularly collected, discussed and shared with those in the delivery chain.

Goals and measures can lead you astray, however, when incentive and motivational mechanisms are screwed up. They can encourage measurement manipulation, rather than improvement and innovation. Another potential trap is when no one is assigned or assumes responsibility for managing progress on a goal.

It's clear that the state is off to a great start (as are many localities in this room), and the most immediate challenge is to maintain a fast pace of progress—in how much, how

fast, how productively, and how fairly you make progress toward your goals—through the end of the Governor’s term and beyond.

So, to the group in this room, let me congratulate you on progress made and urge you to continue full speed ahead.

Next Administration. I also want to send a message to folks not in this room, specifically the current crop of gubernatorial candidates. Specifically, I urge them to commit to continuing and improving MassResults and its goal-focused, data-rich, transparent management practices. Well-administered government is not a partisan issue, but that does not mean it should be ignored during campaign season.

New governors too often toss out their predecessors’ inventions to introduce their own. In this case, that temptation should be resisted. Rather, the candidates should thoughtfully discuss the kinds of improvements they will introduce, such as how to improve data availability, taking care to avoid promises of overly simplistic pay-for-performance systems that likely tempted the measurement manipulation plaguing Veterans’ Administration hospitals in Phoenix and elsewhere.

Governor-elect. Post-election, I urge the Governor-elect to engage the public and state employees in data-rich discussions to understand conditions in the state and discuss priorities, including how ambitious targets should be in the context of past trends, knowledge of effective interventions, and available resources.

In Office. Upon taking office, I urge the next Governor to work with his or her Cabinet members to affirm existing goals or set new ones, establish ambitious targets in priority areas, and follow up no less than quarterly with data-rich discussions to find better ways to make progress, increase return on investment, and improve residents’ experience with government.

After the new Governor’s first year, I suggest the Governor and Cabinet members not just release their annual performance reports on-line as is already happening but also publically discuss progress, problems, and plans. Do the equivalent of businesses’ quarterly call with their most interested investors. It looks to me like MassDoT already does this with its quarterly [town halls around the state](#).

Related to that, I urge the next Governor to question departments that meet all of their targets all of the time. This may seem counter-intuitive, but it is important because a vast body of experience and research has found that stretch targets that are reasonable relative to skills and resources excite people and encourage innovation, leading to unprecedented improvement. Remember that stretch targets are by definition ambitious, so they should not be easy to meet. Therefore, an organization that consistently meets its targets should be cause for concern to make sure that it is not setting timid targets for its priorities rather than the kinds of targets that produce breakthrough gains.

Media. Similarly, I urge the media not to lambast agencies that miss stretch targets and adjust their actions as insights are gained. Instead, question those meeting all their targets. For those of you in government worried about getting attacked for missed targets, I point to the precedent of the Charles River goal. Because the interested public and the media have been engaged and understand what government has been trying and why, missed targets prompt the question, “What will you do next?” rather than an attack.

Your Role. Regardless of whether or not the next Governor has the good sense to adopt these powerful management practices, there is much you can do in your individual agencies on your own.

Current targets, current governor. First, as I said before, push full speed ahead to make significant progress in the areas where you are focusing to the end of this term.

Transition documents. Second, tee up information for transition briefing documents.

There is a tendency for transition documents to describe what an agency does and the hot issues on the horizon, including key decisions that need to be made because of external drivers such as pending court decisions or legislative deadlines. That kind of information is incredibly important, but it is not enough.

In addition, provide a coherent picture of the conditions your agency tries to affect—perhaps through financial support, regulation, information, or other means—and note which of those are problems and which present great opportunities. Describe the people, places, and organizations you engage or help and their characteristics. Do so in a way that will help not just the new political leaders but new employees and other parts of the organization better understand the context in which the organization operates and the choices that must be made to allocate attention, expertise, and resources wisely.

Use the data to tell a story. Use pictures to tell a story. Describe the total, but also note significant variations and relationships across subsets of those you affect. For example, in which schools is the graduation rate going up and in which is it going down? Which water bodies are getting cleaner and which dirtier? Then, break it down by community or population or sector. At what time of day are most accidents happening? And when are the lines the longest at the RMV? Be clear about what you aim to accomplish.

Finally, in transition documents, identify problems and offer options for proposed goals and targets, using the targets to break large goals into bite-sized pieces an agency can manage.

Better Communication. Third, don’t just use the goals and measures to communicate for transition purposes. Use them to inform, enlist, and assist others inside and beyond your organization. Use them, also, to inform individual choice.

The Commonwealth has improved not just the way it delivers, but the way it is communicating its priorities through [Informed Massachusetts](#). Let me offer three broad suggestions for further improving communication of performance information:

First, describe not just what you do but also what you want to accomplish and what you have accomplished. Explain, also, why goals have been chosen and how you plan to make progress in the future. This will make it easier for others, and frankly, even you, to learn from experience.

Second, display statewide performance information in more meaningful ways. For example:

- Show trend lines and show them for longer periods of time for key indicators.
 - This will provide context for interpreting the more recent performance.
 - In addition, for problems where the major trend improvements happened long ago and have been sustained through today (for example, mosquito control to prevent malaria), the longer-term trend line reminds decision-makers why funds for preventative practices are still needed.
- Add vertical lines to trend charts that show dates of key agency actions and relevant external events. While this will not definitively prove causality, it gives a better sense of possible causality than not including the information. When needed, compliment that information with measured pilots including a control group.
- Show how month-to-month results for the current year compare to prior-year results. Kudos to the MBTA for its effort to do this with its crime data.
- Pay more attention to time of day (ToD), day of week (DoW), week of year (WoY) statistics. You will be surprised at how useful that information can be.
 - In New York, for example, the local public radio station, WNYC, graphed the time of day when most crashes happen and showed that speed cameras in school zones shut off just as traffic crashes hit their daily peak. (The graph and a link to the [WNYC website](#) with more graphs are posted on my twitter account [@SMetzenbaum](#).)
- Map your findings if geography is relevant to the problem or possible treatments or solutions.
- Note the source of your statistics, linking to your databases where possible and where it will not compromise personal privacy or business confidentiality.

My third general suggestion about improved performance communications: think explicitly about others in your delivery chain who can affect outcomes, ROI, or government experience and how to get information to them in a format they find useful.

- *Make performance information useful to people in the delivery chain.* Collect, organize and distribute data so it helps people in your organization and others in the delivery chain, as well as regulated parties, pay attention to issues that need attention and make smarter decisions.

- *Make the information local, if possible.* Share goals and data that help cities, towns and regions pick priority problems or opportunities and find ways to make progress on them.
- Because it can readily access the data it sends to the state and federal governments and compare to other localities, my local government uses traffic safety statistics to decide which intersections need redesign. The state and federal governments use the same data, analyzed and displayed in different ways, to make resource allocation and regulatory decisions. *Inform personal decisions.* Display data and its analysis in a way that helps people (or businesses) make better individual decisions?
 - For example, I have long cited the Massachusetts RMV as a model in this regard because it provides find real-time wait times on line. That manages my expectations about how long I should plan to wait and improves my customer experience.
 - For anyone here from the Mass RMV, if you want to continue to be a path-paver, I would love to see you provide analytics that show past patterns of wait times for each branch for each service by time of day, day of week, and week of year patterns. That will make it easier for all of us to plan ahead for the services that still require coming into the office.

I realize, of course, that you cannot move forward with all these communication suggestions at one time. I urge you, though, to pick a few and to make great progress on them.

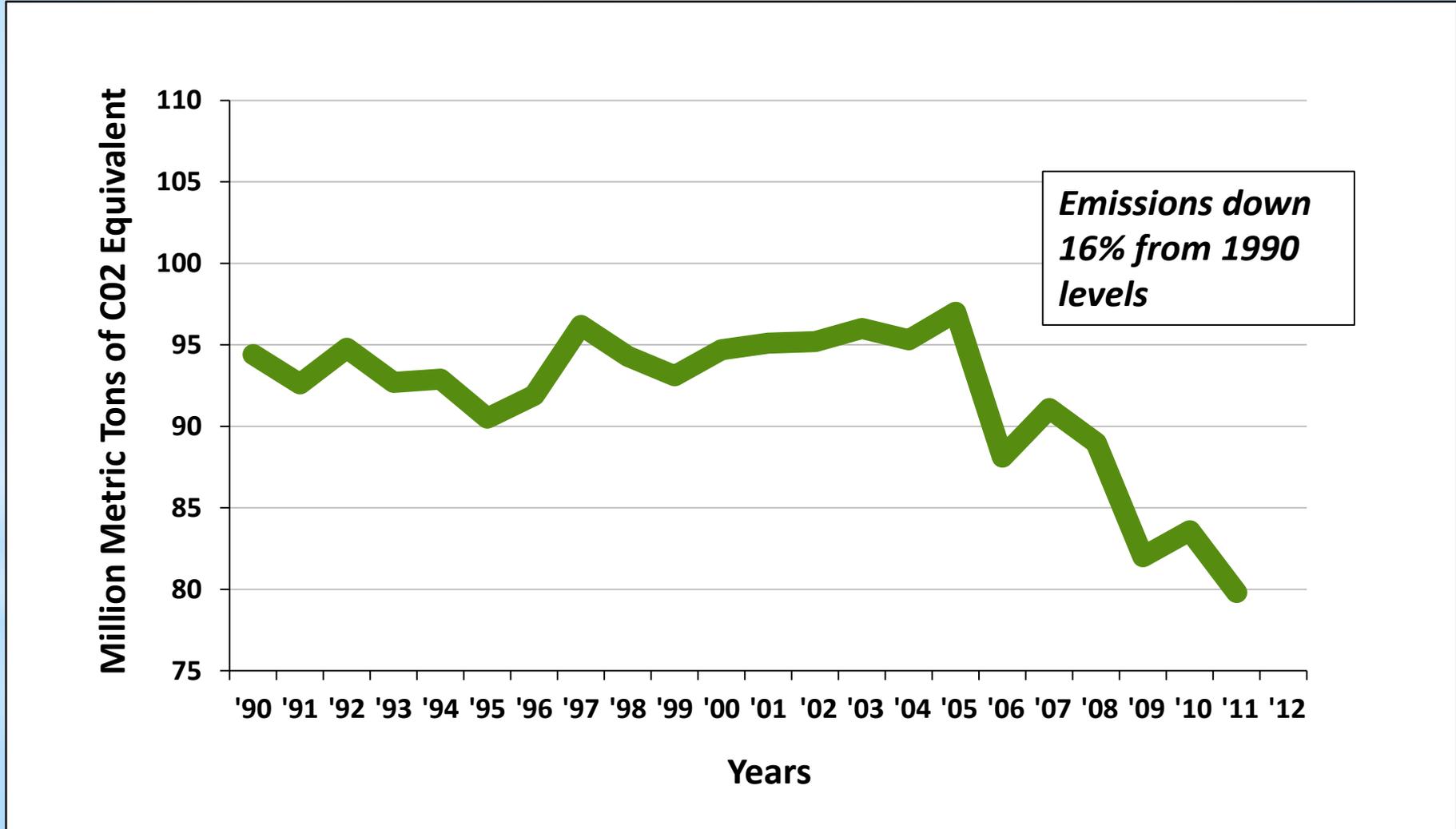
We want government, no matter its size or political complexion, to provide value for our tax dollars and to improve across multiple dimensions: greater beneficial impact, higher return on investment, improved interactions with government, and accountability.

Since the issue was raised by a speaker before me, let me also note that this isn't only about efficiency and effectiveness; equity is also important and can be managed as a goal. Reducing disparities, such as for education and health care access, for example, has been a priority goal for many government leaders and organizations.

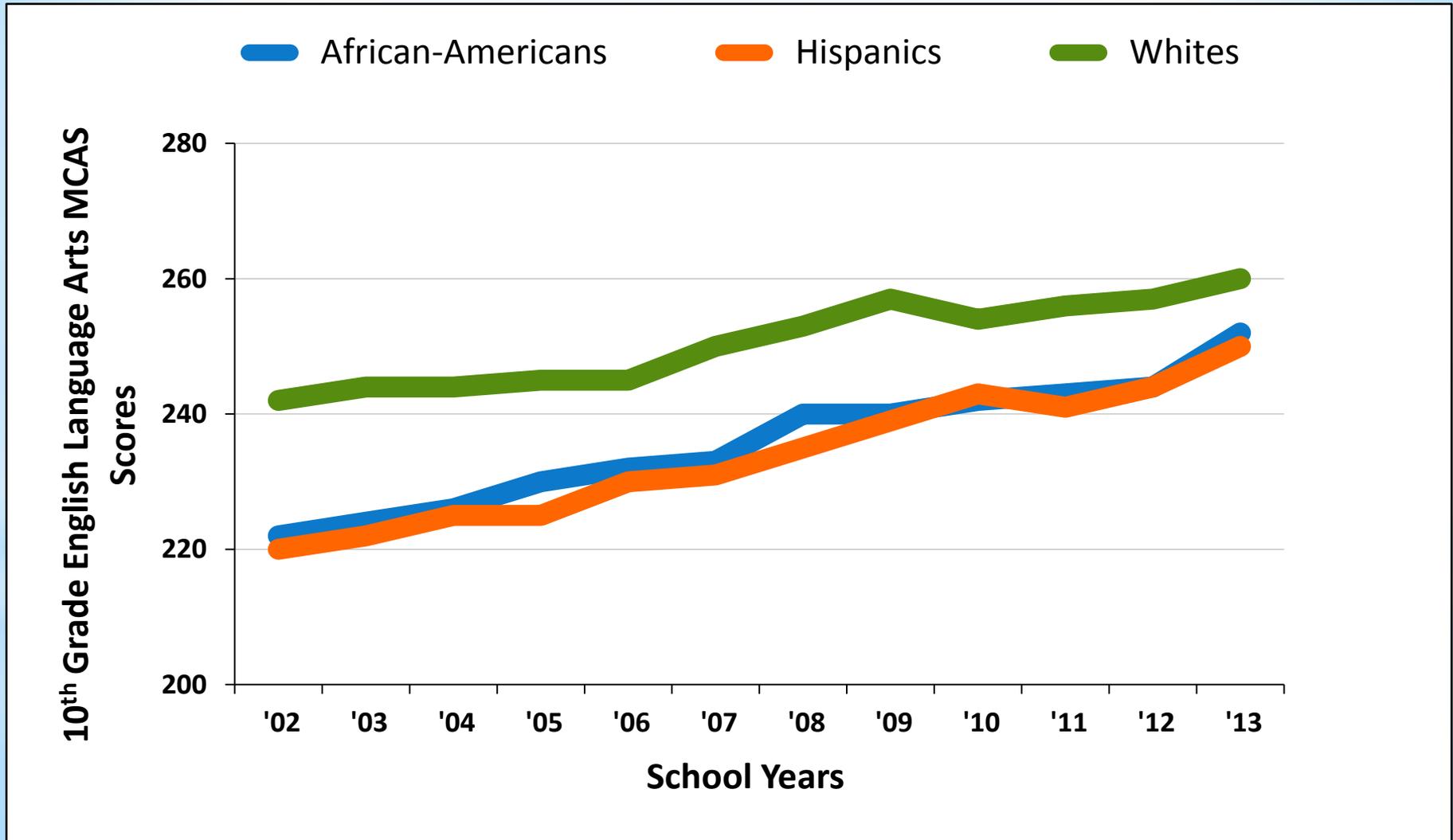
The Patrick Administration and many local governments in this room have made significant strides in handling the business of government. The gubernatorial candidates should study this progress and let the electorate know how they will sustain and accelerate it to deliver better results to the people of Massachusetts. Each of you in this room should also think about what you and your organization can do to sustain and accelerate progress in this area in the next six months and beyond.

We at the Volcker Alliance are committed to catalyzing more attention and action to improve government effectiveness and rebuild trust in government. We salute your progress improving government performance and transparency and stand ready to help the Commonwealth and its communities move forward.

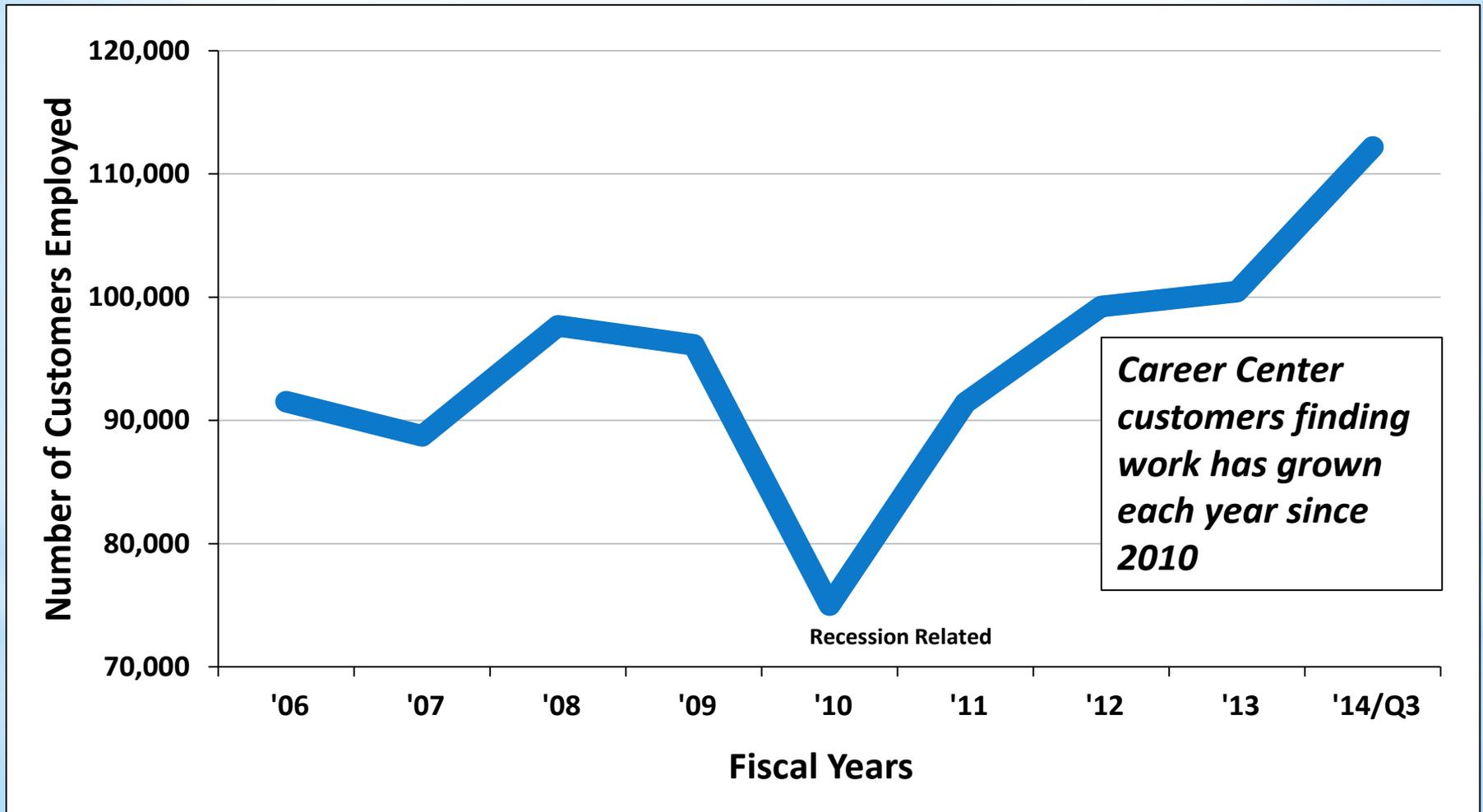
MA Greenhouse Gas Emissions



Narrowing the Education Achievement Gap



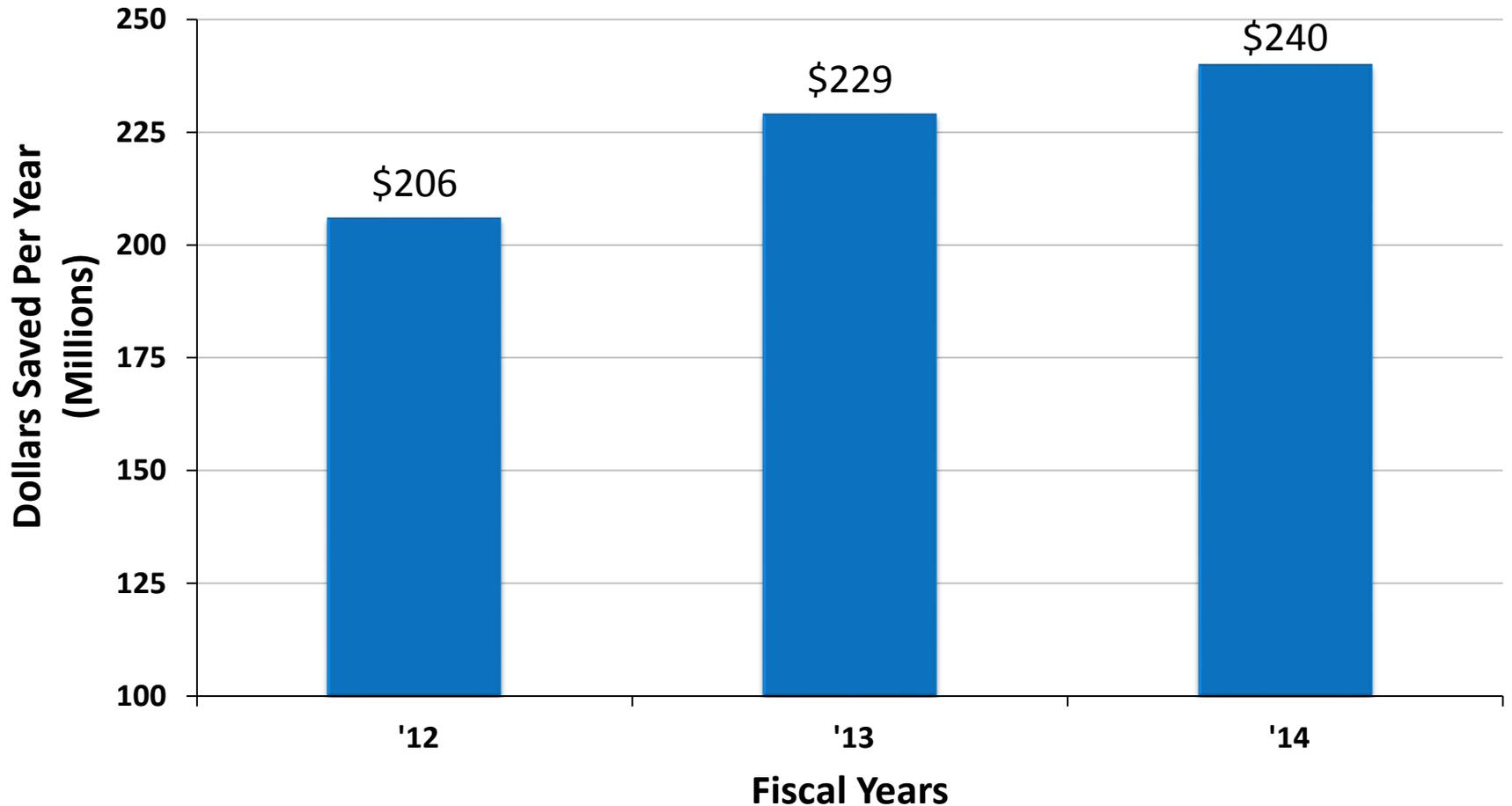
One-Stop Career Center Customers Employed



Municipal Health Care Reform Savings



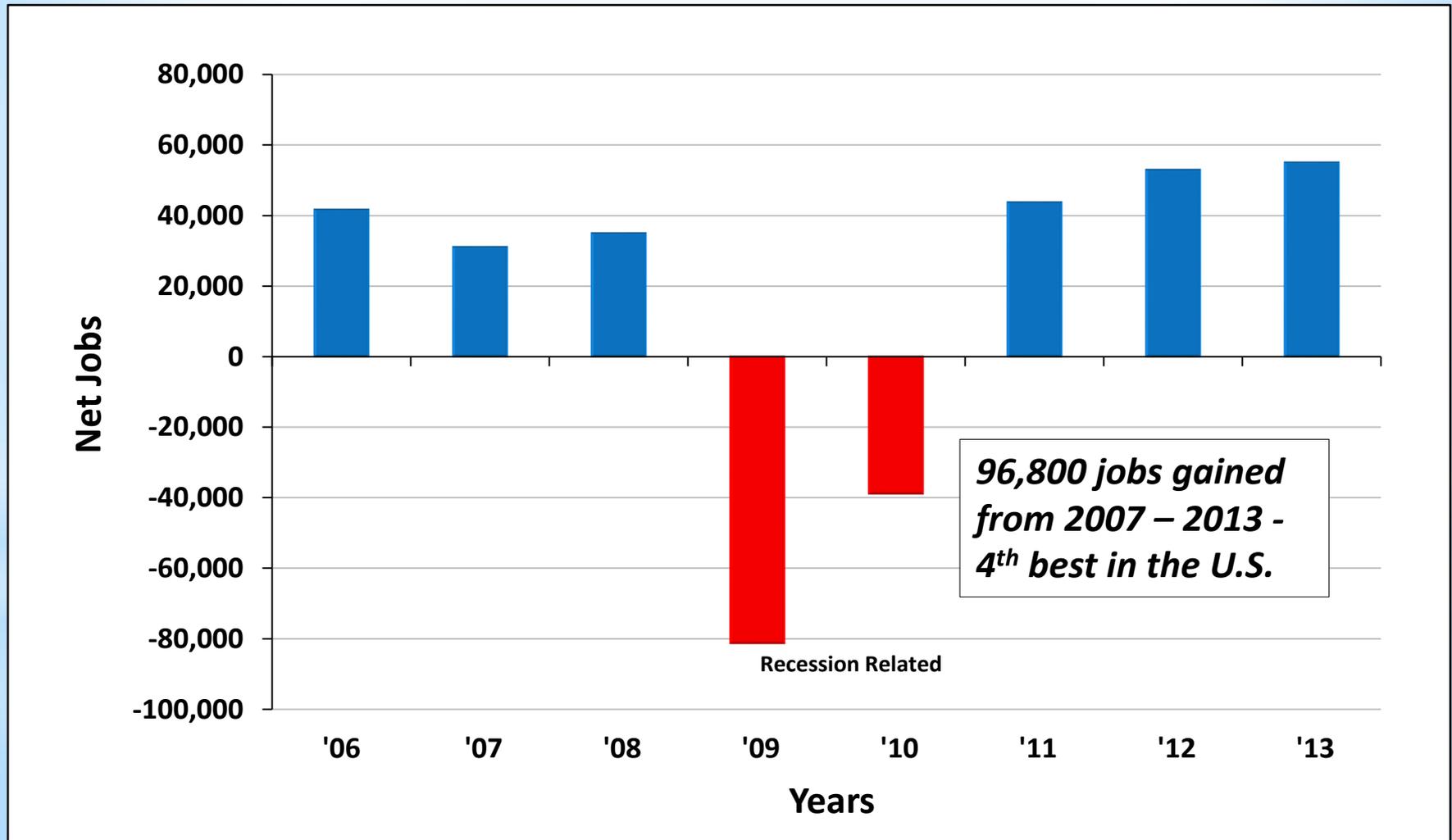
261 Communities have Adopted Municipal Health Care Reform in the Commonwealth



Net Employment Growth



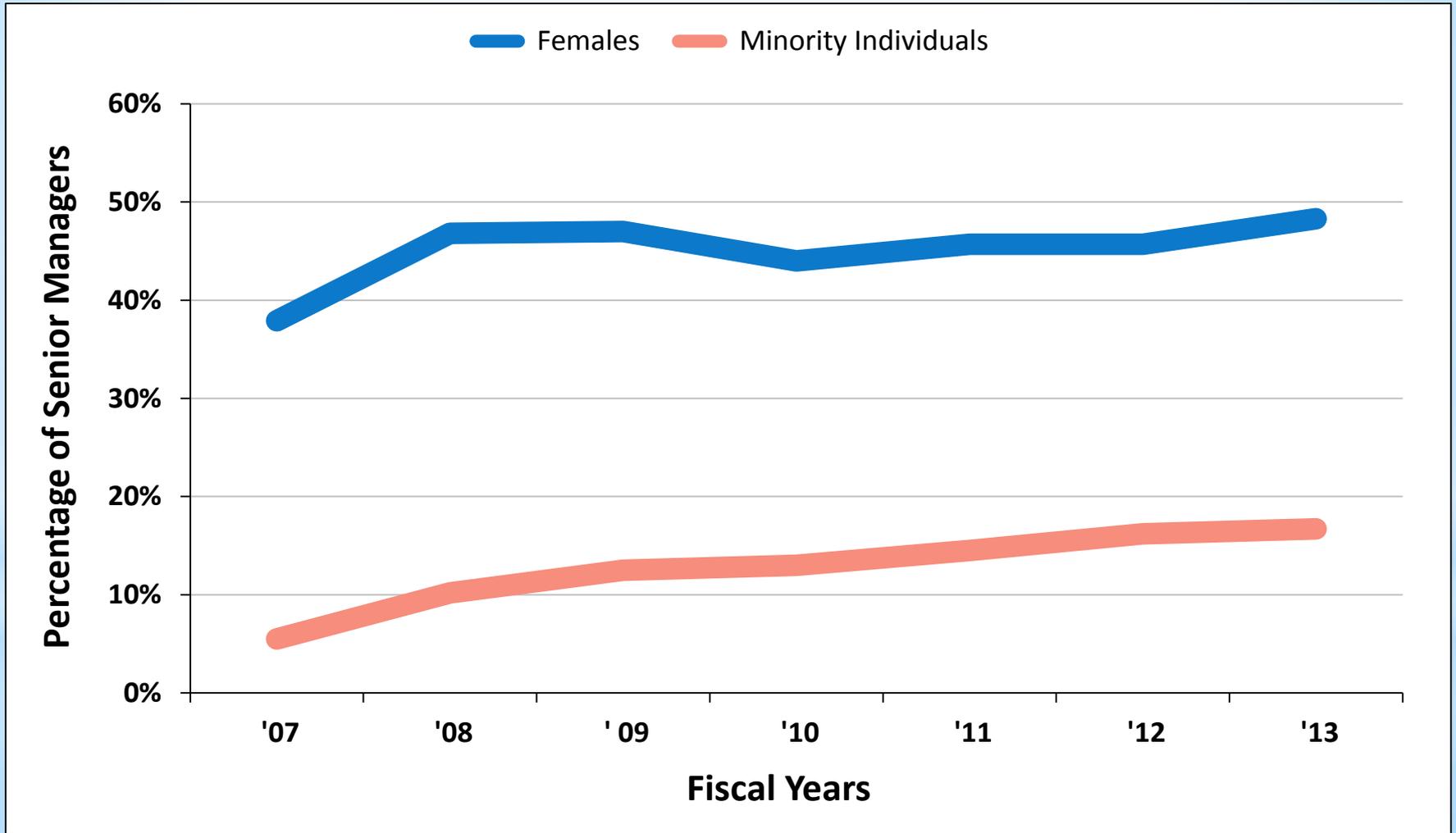
Executive Office of
Housing and Economic
Development



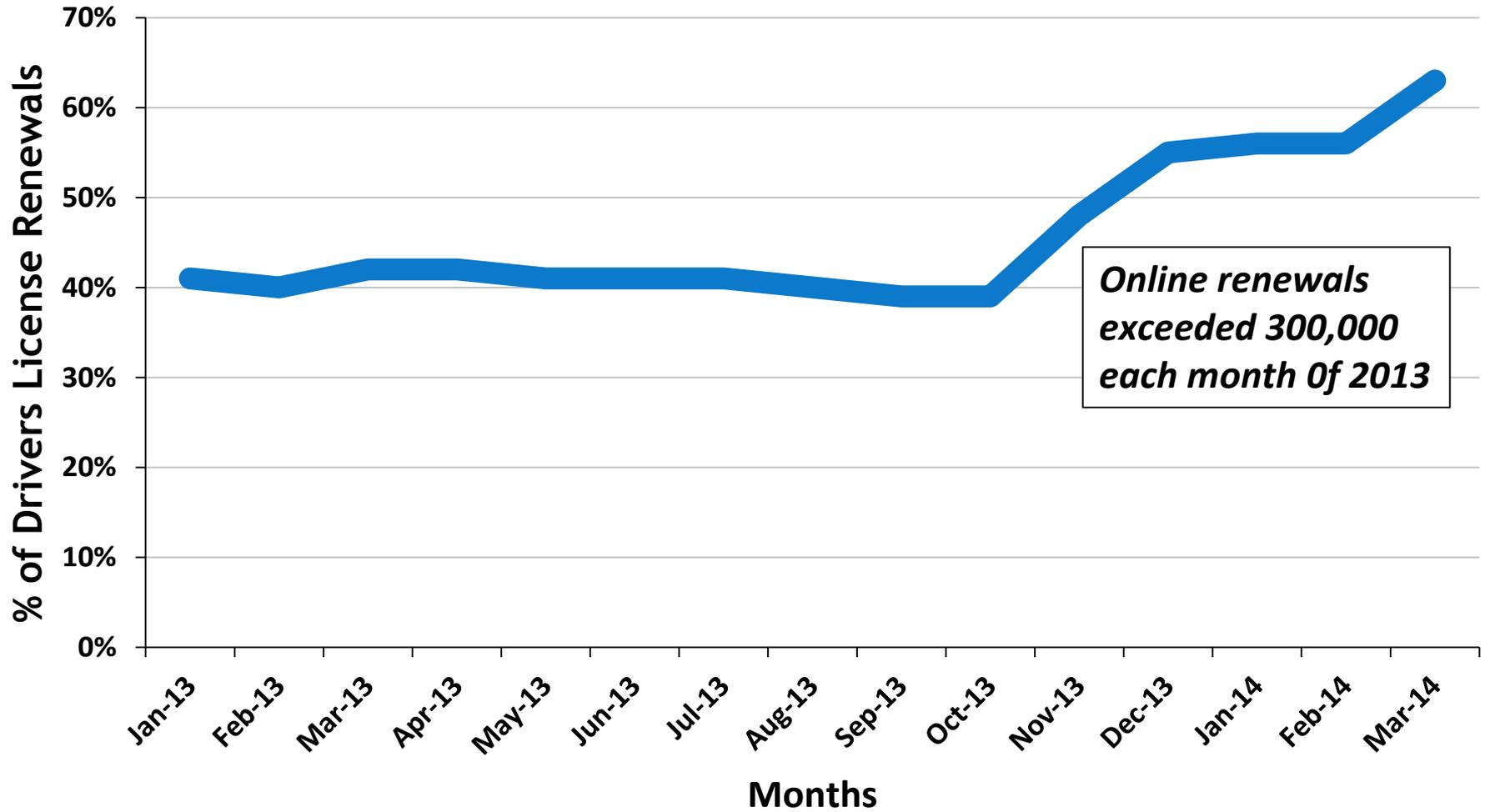
*96,800 jobs gained
from 2007 – 2013 -
4th best in the U.S.*

Recession Related

Diversity of Senior Managers



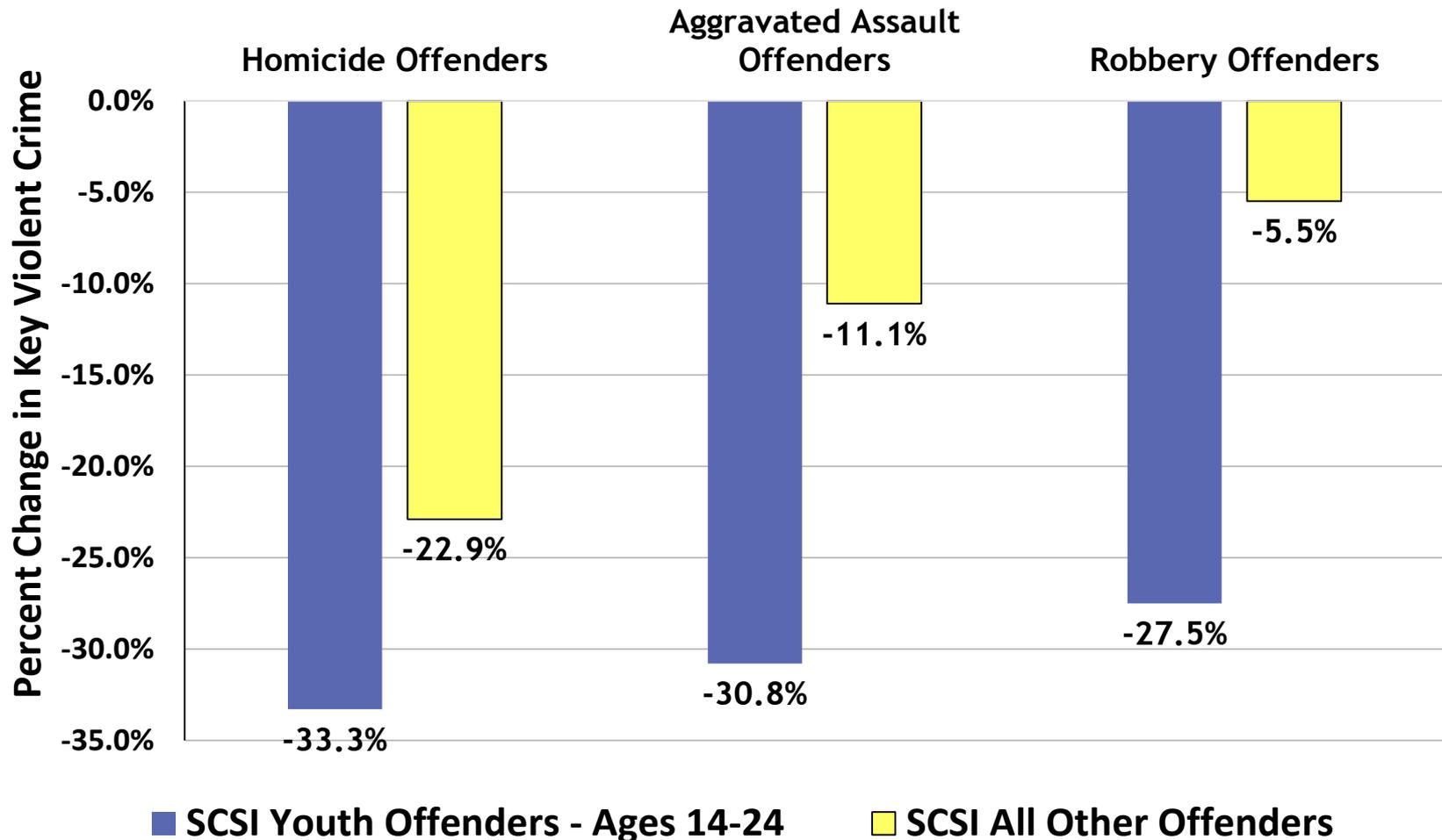
Drivers License Renewals Completed Online



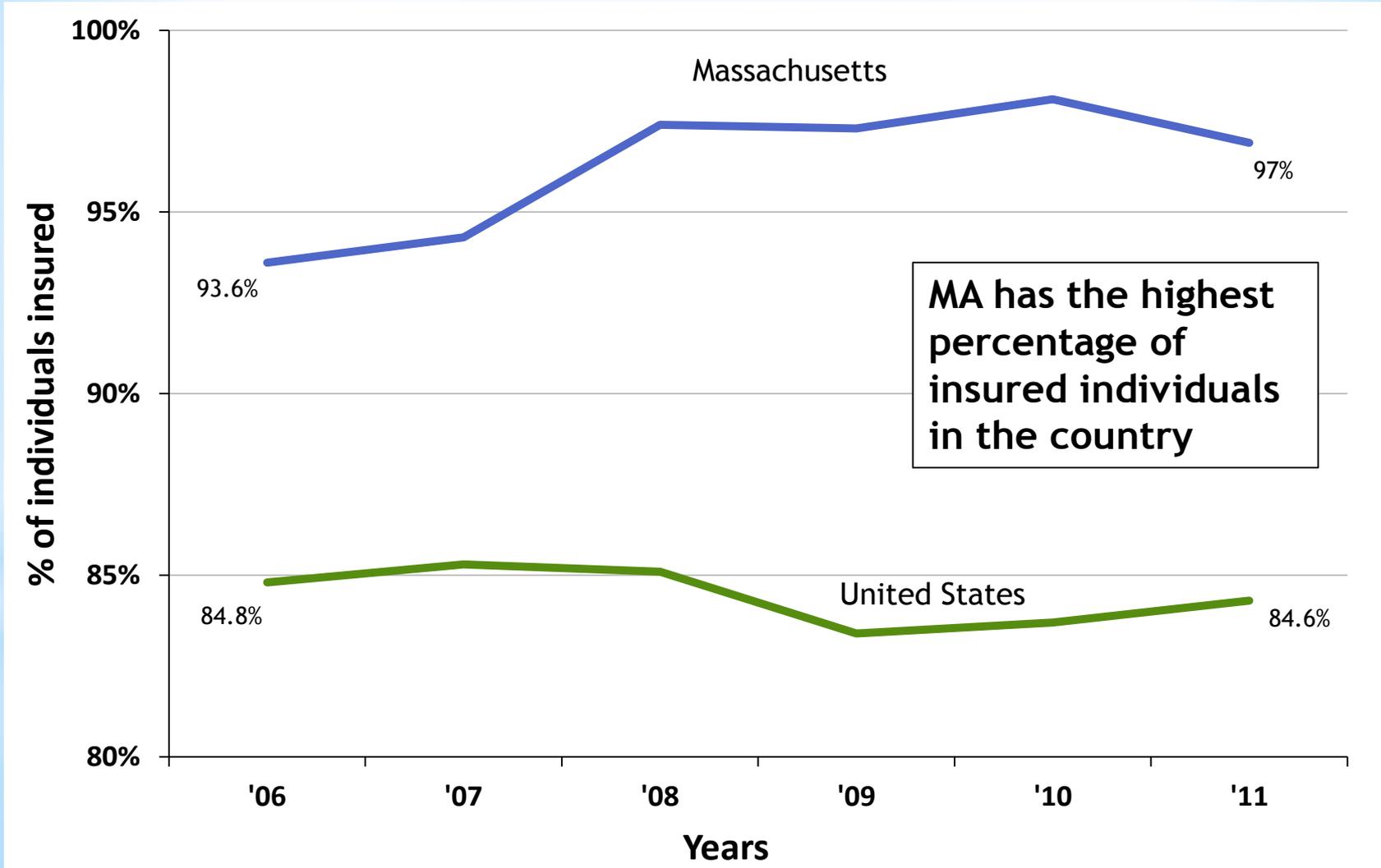
Decreasing Youth Violence 2009-2013



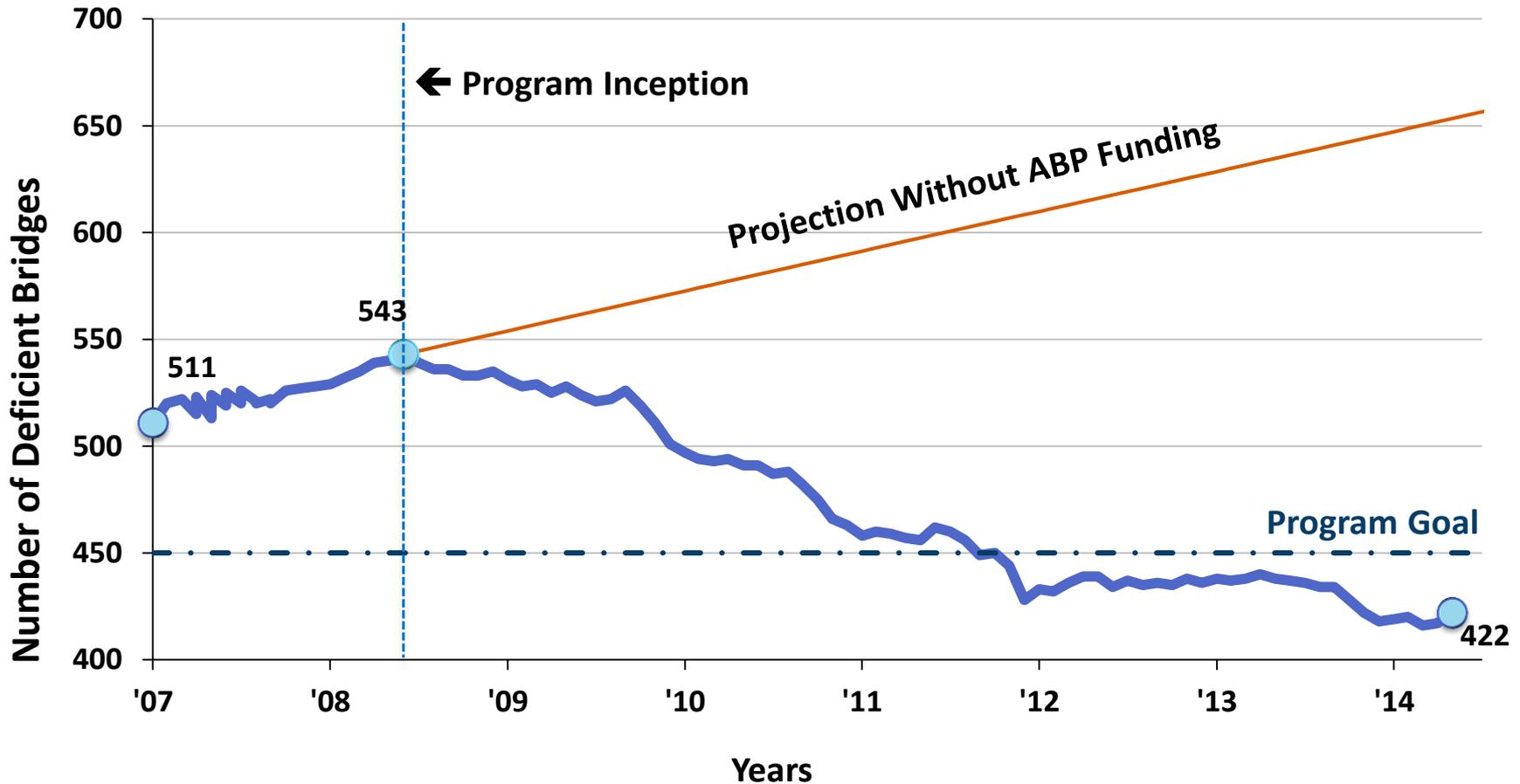
Shannon Community Safety Initiative



Continuing To Lead on Access



Accelerated Bridge Program Progress



**Does not include approximately 600 bridges not eligible for ABP funds*

Performance Management Life Cycle

