

STATEMENT OF PAUL TSONGAS, MEMBER OF CONGRESS

JUNE 1, 1977

STATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE AND LABOR
RE: S. 1735

I would like to express my support of legislation introduced in the Massachusetts Senate by Senator William Bulger to create a special commission on Massachusetts unemployment with emphasis on the problem of youth unemployment.

As a Representative of two older industrial cities which have consistently suffered high unemployment, I am acutely aware of the difficulties encountered by those seeking employment, particularly youth. The wealth of unskilled labor openings on which cities like Lowell and Lawrence once thrived vanished with the entrance of high technology. As a result, many older cities which can no longer offer adequate entry level job openings must now contend with the problem of hundreds of unemployed youths who are willing to work but are unskilled. I believe a crucial function of a special state commission on unemployment would be the exploration of new avenues for persons to enter the labor force since many of the traditional entry routes are obsolete.

As you know, the House of Representatives has passed the Administration youth job bill. The House bill included incentives to lure high school dropouts back to classrooms with a guarantee of part-time jobs. In the 94th and 95th Congress I introduced legislation to create an Office of Youth Employment within the Department of Labor. It would be the job of such an office to administer youth counseling and job placement programs through a direct outreach program involving the U.S. Employment Service and the high schools. Unemployed youths, youths out of school with no career direction would -- through the mechanism established through the government -- receive proper career guidance and training in order to prepare them for a less difficult and more fruitful induction into the labor force. I am satisfied that the legislation passed by the House responds to the needs of youth for career guidance and training.

The proposed study commission on youth unemployment has the potential to establish a positive functional program in which both the private and public sector can work together. I would like to see a partnership of the two, once which would necessarily benefit business by virtue of its contribution to a more stable economy and a more positive and productive society.

I respectfully urge the Committee on Commerce and Labor to consider the state study commission on unemployment as one way of arriving at a worthwhile solution to the state's unemployment problem.