



May 15, 2017

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chairwoman
Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert Scott
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Foxx and Ranking Member Scott:

On behalf of the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), the nation's largest not-for-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of education that prepares youth and adults for successful careers, and Advance CTE, representing the state and territory leaders of our nation's Career Technical Education (CTE) system, we write to express our support for committee passage of the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (H.R. 2353), a bill to reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins). Perkins is the principal federal investment in our nation's CTE system, and is one of the only federal programs that builds the capacity of secondary and postsecondary institutions to offer CTE programs that are academically rigorous and aligned to the needs of business and industry. We commend the House Education and the Workforce Committee and the bill's lead sponsors, Representatives Thompson and Krishnamoorthi, for this bipartisan effort to support the federal investment in CTE.

Career Technical Education sits at the critical intersection of secondary and postsecondary education as well as the workforce development system. Perkins acts as a "bridge builder" between the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA); and H.R. 2353 strengthens the connections through the use of common definitions and terminology and the alignment of reporting requirements.

As the connections between legislation were strengthened, we appreciate the bill's recognition that the educational component of Perkins is integral to high-quality CTE by requiring alignment to rigorous state-identified academic standards and promoting innovative models for integrated academic and technical content. At the same time, we appreciate the efforts made to recognize that the federal investment in CTE programs should not focus on filling immediate, short-term or low-skill, low-wage job vacancies. Instead, H.R. 2353 emphasizes student attainment of skills and knowledge that lead to careers that result in self-sustaining wages and ensures that longer-term talent pipeline needs are met. We are strongly encouraged

by the significant changes made in the local provisions of this legislation, which will more effectively direct federal resources to areas that will have the highest impact through the introduction of a local needs assessment.

As we seek to ensure Perkins funds have the most impact, we also appreciate the efforts made in the bill to streamline and focus the accountability system. However, our memberships have continued to impress upon us their serious concerns about the definition of a secondary CTE concentrator as a basis for that system. The definition in the bill includes two distinct student populations—those exploring various career opportunities (“explorers” in the research literature) and others who are invested in a single CTE program of study (“concentrators”). We appreciate the work of the Committee and sponsors of the legislation to improve the use of this definition in H.R. 2353, however, the data produced under this combined definition, which continues to form the denominator for three of the performance indicators, will tell an imprecise and potentially inaccurate story of CTE’s impact on student performance. The current definition and the way it is applied will not provide state and local leaders with data that is useful in differentiating or guiding policy or program improvement to determine appropriate student supports. We look forward to working with you and the Senate as this process moves forward to ensure that this concern is addressed and we can accurately and appropriately evaluate CTE programs.

We thank you for your consideration of our outstanding concern and for your continued commitment to ensuring the long history of bipartisanship support for the federal investment in CTE. We have sincerely appreciated the Committee staff’s collaboration with our organizations to ensure the legislation aligns to the priorities of the field and will help advance CTE. We remain committed to working together to ensure this legislation will increase access to and support of high-quality CTE that meets the needs of our nation’s economy. We look forward to collaborating with you and your colleagues as Perkins reauthorization continues to take shape.

Sincerely,



Stephen DeWitt
Deputy Executive Director
ACTE



Kimberly A. Green
Executive Director
Advance CTE