



June 21, 2017

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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 Speaker Ryan, Minority Leader Pelosi, 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 House 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.

CTE 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). We appreciate that H.R. 2353 strengthens the connections between these laws through the use of common definitions and terminology and the alignment of reporting requirements. We are also strongly encouraged by the significant changes made in the local provisions of this legislation, which will more effectively direct federal resources to areas that need them the most through the introduction of a local needs assessment.

As we seek to ensure that Perkins funds have the most impact and benefit the greatest number of students, 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 H.R. 2353's definition of a secondary CTE concentrator as a basis for that system.** Unfortunately, the definition in the bill being considered by the House still includes very problematic language that we believe will have a detrimental impact on the CTE system.

This definition 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”). The data produced under this combined definition, which continues to form the denominator for three of the performance indicators, will not be valuable to the field. It will tell an imprecise and potentially inaccurate story of CTE’s impact on student performance. Furthermore, the current definition and the way it is applied will not provide state and local leaders with data that is useful. Their ability to differentiate the performance of CTE programs, guide policy, and determine appropriate student supports will be severely limited should this definition remain the basis of the secondary accountability system. We look forward to working with you when the bill is conferenced with the Senate to ensure that this concern is addressed and we can accurately and appropriately evaluate CTE programs in order to best serve our nation’s students.

We thank you for your consideration of our outstanding concern and for your continued commitment to ensuring the long history of bipartisan support for the federal investment in CTE. We remain committed to working with you 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