

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 13, 2021

The Honorable Speaker Nancy Pelosi  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chair John Yarmuth  
U.S. House Budget Committee  
204-E Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Leader Charles Schumer  
U.S. Senate  
S-221, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chair Bernard Sanders  
U.S. Senate Budget Committee  
624 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, Chair Yarmuth, and Chair Sanders

As you continue to negotiate the final text of the Build Back Better Act, we ask that you provide no less than the nearly \$80 billion in workforce development funding that was included in the House Education and Labor Committee’s portion of this critical legislation. Workforce development funding is essential to fostering an equitable pandemic recovery, preparing people for the jobs that will be created by the Build Back Better Act and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and supporting the ongoing clean energy transition.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) anchors the nation’s federal workforce system and provides states with resources to support and expand existing local efforts to educate and train workers to secure employment. Unfortunately, over the last two decades, funding for WIOA’s adult, dislocated, and youth formula programs declined by 40 percent. Career and technical education and adult education programs have also experienced consistent cuts. Currently, the public workforce system only serves 30 percent of those who are eligible. The workforce funding proposals advanced by the House Education and Labor Committee remedy this protracted disinvestment. The proposals look to the careers of the future by funding Industry and Sectoral Partnership grants for training in high wage, high skill, and in-demand sectors, including advanced manufacturing, vehicle electrification, clean energy and more.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of investing in workforce funding, especially for those who have suffered most significantly from the economic downturn, including workers of color, women, and low-wage workers. As a result of the pandemic, millions of jobs may never return to the economy, and two-thirds of unemployed workers report seriously considering changing their field or occupation.<sup>1</sup> Though Black and Hispanic women account for less than one-third of all women in the workforce, they experienced 46 percent of the total

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<sup>1</sup> Parker, Kim, et al. “Unemployed Americans Are Feeling the Emotional Strain of Job Loss; Most Have Considered Changing Occupations.” Pew Research Center, 10 Feb. 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/02/10/unemployed-americans-are-feeling-the-emotional-strain-of-job-loss-most-have-considered-changing-occupations/>.

decrease among women in the workforce between February 2020 and 2021.<sup>2</sup> During that same period, unemployment among low-wage workers was nearly twice that of middle-wage workers. Though millions remain unemployed and historically marginalized workers have disproportionately been affected by the economic downturn, Congress has only provided \$345 million for our nation's workforce system in COVID-19 relief packages, compared to nearly \$6 billion during the Great Recession. The funding provided in the House Education and Labor Committee's proposal designates funding for those with barriers to employments, including ex-offenders, and transitions those with disabilities into competitive integrated employment. The Committee's workforce investments would provide the necessary training and support to make sure our pandemic recovery is equitable.

The Build Back Better Act and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will not be able to deliver the economic and societal transformation we are fighting for without commensurate investments in workforce development. These legislative packages include billions for local surface transportation projects, clean energy technologies, electric vehicle infrastructure, transmission line expansion, and many other infrastructure investments. To help more people, including women and workers of color, access the good-paying infrastructure jobs that the economic recovery package will create, we must provide adequate funding for paid, on-the-job training programs, including apprenticeships, through our public federal workforce programs.

Additionally, the expansive provisions to address the climate crisis in the Build Back Better Act underscore the need for strong investments in workforce development. Wind, solar, and energy storage are declining in cost, increasing in efficiency, and expanding across the nation. Clean power supports more than 415,000 jobs across all 50 states, and millions more could be created through rapid decarbonization.<sup>3</sup> Provisions in the Build Back Better Act have the potential to facilitate the renewable energy revolution, decarbonize our economy, and create good-paying jobs, but these jobs cannot be realized without rapidly reskilling the nation's workforce. We cannot leave behind those who rely on, and will become displaced by, their jobs in carbon intensive industries. The Build Back Better Act must include significant resources to replenish federal workforce training programs to guarantee our workforce can meet demand, provide a brighter future for workers that currently depend on the fossil fuel industry, and successfully decarbonize our economy.

We understand there are many important priorities under consideration in the Build Back Better Act and applaud your efforts to negotiate and pass this historic investment in good-paying jobs, the economy, and environment. We also understand the reality in front of us: without reinvesting and reinvigorating our nation's workforce development system, we cannot recover from this pandemic equitably, nor will we be able to meet the demand for jobs in the infrastructure and clean energy sectors.

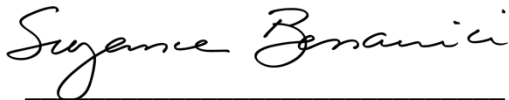
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<sup>2</sup> Kochhar, Rakesh, and Jesse Bennett. "U.S. Labor Market Inches Back from the COVID-19 Shock, but Recovery Is Far from Complete." Pew Research Center, 14 Apr. 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/04/14/u-s-labor-market-inches-back-from-the-covid-19-shock-but-recovery-is-far-from-complete/>.

<sup>3</sup> "Clean Power Facts and Statistics." American Clean Power Association, 2 Aug. 2021, <https://cleanpower.org/facts/>.

Thank you for considering our request to preserve the nearly \$80 billion in workforce funding outlined in the House Education and Labor Committee's portion of the Build Back Better Act. We look forward to continuing to work with you in advancing this transformational legislation.

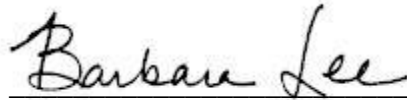
Sincerely,



Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress



Andy Levin  
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress



Frederica S. Wilson  
Member of Congress

#### ADDITIONAL SIGNATORIES

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