April 13, 2023

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin  The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Chair Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Senate Appropriations Committee Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510 Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Baldwin and Ranking Member Capito:

As you develop the Fiscal Year 2024 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill, we urge you to provide robust funding for the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins), Basic State Grant program (Title I). The Perkins Act Basic State Grant is the principal source of federal support for CTE programs and is critical in the development of academic and technical knowledge and employability skills for nearly 12 million secondary, postsecondary and adult learners.

Perkins CTE programs provide a substantial return on investment while consistently evolving to meet the needs of students and employers. These programs teach students transferable skills to ensure college and career readiness and retrain adult workers who need to adapt their skills for a changing job market. Providing a robust investment in Perkins would support nearly 12 million students across the country, the business community that relies on a qualified workforce, and the future economic competitiveness of our country.

According to the most recent Job Openings and Labor Turnover (JOLTS) Survey from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the ratio of unemployed workers to job openings is 0.5, meaning that there are nearly two open jobs for every unemployed person. This tight labor market underscores the immense demand for skilled workers. CTE remains a critical component of the workforce pipeline for key industries that are needed to sustain long-term economic growth and recovery, such as health care, STEM, manufacturing, construction and transportation distribution and logistics. These investments are especially important to ensure that other federal investments, such as those recently made in the nation’s infrastructure and advanced manufacturing capacity, can be successful.

However, learner demand for CTE programs, especially programs in in-demand sectors, has exceeded the investment in Perkins funding, and as a result, CTE institutions have been providing fewer opportunities for teacher professional development, deferring purchase of up-to-date industry standard equipment for the classroom and limiting program capacity despite this growing student demand. With current and anticipated demand growing, more resources are needed. It is vital that Congress continues to build upon the recent increases to Perkins V in order
to fully support nearly 12 million learners it serves across the nation and ensure we have the
talent pipeline needed to fully recover from the jobs crisis caused by the pandemic.

While we were pleased that Perkins Basic State Grants were funded at $1.43 billion in
Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, an increase of $50 million over FY 2022, more must still be done to
provide additional opportunities for students across the nation. Conservatively adjusting for
inflation, the Perkins Basic State Grant program remains more than $320 million below its levels
from 20 years ago. As such, we must do more to support students, high schools, technical
centers, and community colleges across the country. For the many reasons outlined here, we
respectfully request that the Perkins State Grant program receive robust funding for FY24. Thank
you for your continued leadership and your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Tim Kaine
United States Senator

Jack Reed
United States Senator

Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

Tina Smith
United States Senator

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator
Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator

Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator

Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator

Brian Schatz  
United States Senator

Alex Padilla  
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator

Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator

Ron Wyden  
United States Senator

Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

Ben Ray Luján
United States Senator

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator

Mark Kelly
United States Senator

Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator

Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator
Raphael Warnock  
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator

Jon Tester  
United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator

Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator

Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator

Jon Ossoff  
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator

Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator

Jacky Rosen  
U.S. Senator
Peter Welch
United States Senator