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

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

Dear Chair Capito and Ranking Member Baldwin:

As you develop the Fiscal Year 2026 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill, we urge you to provide increased 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 primary federal investment in CTE programs and is critical in the development of academic and technical knowledge and employability skills for more than 11 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. CTE programs teach students transferable skills to ensure college and career readiness and support retraining efforts to help adult workers who, increasingly, must upskill and reskill to remain competitive in a rapidly changing labor market. Strengthening the federal investment in CTE made through Perkins would support more than 11 million students across the country, the business community that relies on a highly skilled workforce, and the future economic competitiveness of our country.

Despite the significant role CTE plays in developing a skilled workforce, the most recent Job Openings and Labor Turnover (JOLTS) Survey from the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that the ratio of unemployed workers to job openings is 0.9. This means there are still more job openings than unemployed individuals, reflecting a tight labor market. This still underscores the immense need for CTE programs that directly prepare students to enter today's modern economy. 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 healthcare, STEM, manufacturing, construction, transportation, and distribution and logistics. These investments are especially important to ensure that other federal initiatives, 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 programs have been unable to provide for much-needed CTE teacher professional development, deferring the purchase of up-to-date industry standard equipment for the classroom and limiting program capacity despite this growing student demand. With demand growing, more resources are needed. Despite these significant and growing needs, less than three percent of K-12 funding is currently dedicated to CTE, and this figure is less than one percent without the federal investment made by Perkins. It is, therefore, vital that Congress continues to build upon the recent increases to Perkins 's Basic State Grant program in order to fully support the more than 11 million learners it serves across the nation.

While we were pleased that Perkins Basic State Grants was funded at approximately \$1.44 billion in Fiscal Year (FY) 2025, 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 significantly below levels of investment 20 years ago and less than half of the federal investment made in 1980. 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 receives increased funding for FY26. Thank you for your continued leadership and your consideration of our request.

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