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July 28, 2016

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

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Pass H.R. 5587, Invest in America's Students, Businesses and Economy

Dear Speaker Ryan and Representative Pelosi:

On behalf of Associated Equipment Distributors (AED), I urge you to move swiftly to pass and enact the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (H.R. 5587).

AED is the trade association representing independent, authorized distributors of construction, mining, forestry, energy, industrial and agricultural equipment. H.R. 5587, sponsored by Reps. G.T. Thompson (R-Pa.) and Katherine Clark (D-Ma.), represents an opportunity for Congress to address one of the most pressing challenges facing American businesses: the skilled worker shortage.

A recent study sponsored by the AED Foundation and prepared by researchers at the College of William & Mary found the technician shortage in our industry is costing equipment dealers approximately \$2.4 billion each year in lost revenue and economic opportunity. As a result, industry leaders report difficulty meeting customer demand in the varied industries distributors serve (construction, mining, agriculture, energy, etc.), underscoring how a skills gap in one sector of the economy can affect several others.

The AEDF/William & Mary study found the top reason technician positions go unfilled is that applicants lack the necessary hard skills. Curricula at high schools, community colleges and technical schools are not aligned with employer needs, meaning the high-paying jobs are going unfilled. Congress worked hard in 2015 to restore certainty to federal transportation programs and tax policy through passage of the FAST and PATH Acts; unfortunately, the skills gap is preventing American businesses from fully capitalizing on the economic opportunities those laws have created.

By enacting H.R. 5587 and reinforcing CTE programs, educators and their partners in the business community can improve student outcomes and provide the skills required to be successful in the workforce (or continuing education). H.R. 5587 focuses on areas where improvements can be made to current law, building upon past successes and enhancing aspects of the long-overdue-for-reauthorization Carl D. Perkins Act in order to better serve both workers and employers. The bill will help:

- Align CTE programs to the needs of the regional, state and local labor markets.
- Support effective and meaningful collaboration between secondary and postsecondary institutions and employers.
- Increase student participation in work-based learning opportunities.
- Promote the use of industry recognized credentials and other recognized post-secondary credentials.

These improvements will more effectively spend federal dollars to help our nation's students acquire the skills that they need and employers – including AED members – are demanding.

Simply put, by making technical education a priority, Congress can help better prepare workers for well-paying careers, ensure that U.S. companies are able to seize new business opportunities and make the United States more competitive in the global economy. Businesses, schools and government officials must collectively commit to tackling the technical education crisis at all levels, and you can take a great step towards enabling that commitment by passing H.R. 5587.

On behalf of AED and its members, I applaud the ongoing bipartisan commitment to invest in our nation's students, workers and economy through the Perkins CTE program. We look forward to working together to build the nation's technical workforce.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian P. McGuire". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "B".

Brian P. McGuire
President & CEO