



September 12, 2016

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 John Kline
Chairman
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, Leader Pelosi, Chairman Kline 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 and 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. 5587), 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 Clark, for this bipartisan effort to support the federal investment in CTE.

The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act builds on current law by emphasizing the importance of CTE programs of study, while maintaining the flexibility of states and local recipients to develop and implement program models that best suit their needs and available resources. The bill encourages greater alignment across federal programs by incorporating common definitions, aligning performance indicators and integrating innovative practices, like sector partnerships and career pathways, from both the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and Every Student Succeeds Act. We are also supportive of the legislation's expansion of Perkins' "reserve fund" which will afford states greater opportunities to support innovative CTE initiatives.

The proposed accountability system includes streamlined performance measures that emphasize important CTE program outcomes such as credential attainment, and makes great strides toward improving and incentivizing connections between secondary and postsecondary education and workforce data systems. It also promotes more meaningful measures of CTE student success by formally recognizing CTE concentrator performance as the standard for assessing program effectiveness. However, we have an outstanding concern related to H.R. 5587's definition for a secondary CTE concentrator. As currently structured, this definition has potentially negative consequences for the entire accountability system, diminishing our ability to determine the impact of CTE on student performance. As the reauthorization process moves forward, this concern must be addressed. We look forward to working with you and the Senate as this process moves forward to ensure we can accurately and appropriately evaluate CTE programs.

Of critical importance to our members, the legislation preserves the Title I Basic State Grant's federal-to-state and state-to-local formulas and current funding recipients. While partnerships with the private sector and other stakeholders should be encouraged, we support maintaining individual school districts and postsecondary institutions as direct recipients of Perkins funds. We are also encouraged by the legislation's retention of Perkins' governance structure, which acknowledges the importance of a state-identified Perkins eligible agency.

The bill also makes important progress toward streamlining uses of funds, while continuing funding for critical components of CTE, including career exploration and awareness activities, educator professional development and implementing elements of high-quality CTE programs of study, and instituting a new local needs assessment to ensure more intentional connections between local planning, uses of funds and performance results. Through this process, the bill also provides for substantive and ongoing consultation with employers and other local stakeholders, and ensures the business community has an important role in the development and implementation of CTE programs.

We urge members of the House of Representatives to support passage of the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act and we hope that Congress will build upon this bipartisan effort and deliver a comprehensive Perkins reauthorization in the coming months.

Sincerely,



Stephen DeWitt
Deputy Executive Director
ACTE



Kimberly A. Green
Executive Director
Advance CTE