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June 5, 2017

The Honorable Alexander Acosta  
Secretary  
Department of Labor  
200 Constitution Ave, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20210

Dear Secretary Acosta:

The Job Corps program is designed to provide disadvantaged youth with the skills necessary to obtain and hold jobs or further their education. Currently, there are more than 60,000 students enrolled in 129 residential Job Corps centers nationwide. Administered by the Department of Labor's (Department) Employment and Training Administration (ETA), the program most recently was reauthorized by the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA) in 2014. As a residential program, Job Corps, and the centers contracted by the Department, have a responsibility to provide a safe and effective learning and living environment for program participants. However, there has been a troubling increase in the number of student-related safety incidents. The Committee on Education and the Workforce has jurisdiction over the program, and we repeatedly expressed our concerns regarding student safety with the previous administration. We remain committed to working with the Department to fix Job Corps' safety and security deficiencies to help ensure all youth in the program receive a safe and successful experience.

Congressional and the Department's Inspector General concerns over the program are well documented. Audits completed by the Department's Office of Inspector General (OIG) in 2009, 2010, and 2015 found serious incidents related to student safety were unreported, uninvestigated, or improperly addressed due to inconsistent enforcement of program disciplinary policies and inadequate program oversight. In testimony at a Committee on Oversight and Government Reform hearing on February 1, 2017, the Department's Inspector General stated, "Job Corps centers have been troubled by violence and other criminal behavior for years, and the program remains challenged in its efforts to provide a safe learning environment at its centers."<sup>1</sup> On March 31, 2017, the OIG released its latest report, which found that Job Corps did not respond

<sup>1</sup> <https://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Dahl-DOL-IG-Statement-Empowering-IGs-2-1.pdf>

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effectively to potentially serious criminal misconduct, many centers have physical security weaknesses, and efforts to mitigate violence lacked a continuous evaluation and improvement process.

In 2015, youth enrolled in the Job Corps program were tragically murdered at the St. Louis Job Corps Center and the Homestead, Florida Job Corps Center. Since then, there have been many other instances of improper staff behavior, drug or violence-related infractions, and student deaths. Remarkably, there are other issues in Job Corps, in addition to student safety, that point to a program plagued by serious deficiencies in management and oversight.

For example, Job Corps also has a history of financial mismanagement. A 2015 Government Accountability Office report details how ETA officials projected that program costs would exceed appropriations and when officials took actions to address cost overruns, their guidance to Job Corps centers was often not timely nor complete. The financial mismanagement reduced on-board strength and limited student education opportunities. The Job Corps program also has experienced significant contract management failures. Job Corps has repeatedly relied upon so-called bridge contracts as a consequence of the program's procurement backlog. Contractual management is a powerful oversight tool allowing the Department the opportunity to evaluate fully the effectiveness of the centers and to hold accountable those who operate these centers. However, procurement failures in the program have denied the Department the ability to use this tool effectively.

On October 26, 2016, Committee staff met with Department officials to receive an update on many of the incidents we just described and to learn about Department actions to address these challenges, specifically as they relate to student safety and security. The meeting provided the Department an opportunity to describe a number of initiatives that are intended to improve program safety and security. In light of recent events and new leadership at the Department, by June 19, 2017, the Committee requests a detailed response outlining all of the steps the Department is taking to address student safety concerns and the broader oversight and management challenges experienced by Job Corps.

Thank you for your attention to this request. If you have any questions, please contact Clint Raine ([clint.raine@mail.house.gov](mailto:clint.raine@mail.house.gov)) or James Redstone ([james.redstone@mail.house.gov](mailto:james.redstone@mail.house.gov)) with the Committee at (202)-225-6558.

Sincerely,



Virginia Foxx  
Chairwoman



Brett Guthrie  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Higher Education and  
Workforce Development