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Opening Statement
Representative Joe Heck (R-MN)
Field Hearing on "Reviving our Economy: How Career and Technical Education Can Strengthen the Workforce"

I recently visited Southwest Career and Technical Academy here in Nevada's Third District and met with students, teachers, and administrators to learn about the school and the courses they offer.

I also got the chance to hear firsthand from students about their experiences with career and technical education and how they think it will help them in the future. The overall impression I got from them was clear.

They are eager to do well and graduate. They are eager to learn skills they know are in-demand right now and they are eager to take those skills into the working world or on to college.

I even ate lunch provided by the Culinary Arts students and let me tell you; It was delicious. I am sure all of you who stick around for the tour of the school will be just as impressed as I was with the students, the facilities, and the quality of the educational experience students receive at Southwest.

But Southwest is just one of a number of highly successful schools here in the Clark County School District offering students educational opportunities in fields ranging from computer science and information technology to law enforcement and nursing.

In fact, the Clark County School District is home to 25 Magnet Schools and Career & Technical Academies dedicated to providing students a variety of pathways leading to both careers and higher education.

17 of these schools, including Southwest, were recently recognized as either a school of excellence or a school of distinction by the national organization Magnet Schools of America. During the 2012 school year, nearly 40,000 students in CCSD were enrolled in career and technical education courses, representing 44% percent of the high school student population.

Students enrolled in CTE have demonstrated themselves to be high-performing, highly-motivated individuals who, according to information we received from Clark County School

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District, graduate at a higher rate than their traditional high school peers.

While enrolled, CTE students are choosing courses of study that will lead them down a path to success in the increasingly-advanced global economy.

On the Committee, we are always talking about the importance of STEM education - education focused on science, technology, engineering, and math.

Well our CTE students have heard the message. Among the most popular courses of study are information technologies and the skilled and technical sciences.

And the skills learned in our magnet and career and technical academies are helping sectors of our economy - like manufacturing and health care services - erase talent shortages and fill available jobs.

CTE programs also prepare students for critically important careers in public service. Our communities need individuals well-schooled in criminal justice, law enforcement, early childhood development, and emergency medical services.

A competent, highly-trained workforce in these areas will make our state and our local communities safer and healthier.

Finally, career and technical education extends all of these opportunities to those who have been disproportionately affected by the recession and the slow pace of our economic recovery.

Fifty three percent of CTE students are Hispanic and African American while another 8% are Asian Americans.

These demographic groups are a growing, thriving part of the diverse culture and economy of the Las Vegas Valley and by enrolling in CTE programs, these students are learning skills and acquiring knowledge that will help put them on a path to success as well as strengthen and diversify our local economy.

Clearly, career and technical education academies are critically important now more than ever. Our students thrive in them and our economy relies on them.

Yet as CTE is moving this region's economy forward, a recent proposal by the Obama Administration threatens to drastically reduce CTE funding for our state.

Included within the President's budget proposal, guaranteed formula funding for CTE programs in Nevada would be cut by nearly 50%, while CTE programs in other states would only be cut by less than 1%.

This large disparity in cuts is caused by an outdated funding formula included in the 2006 *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act*.

The bill established a funding formula largely based on population and poverty; however, there is also a hold-harmless provision included within the formula that guarantees states will receive the federal funding levels provided in 1998.

However, since that time Nevada's population has increased from 1.8 million to more than

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2.75 million causing our state to face disproportionate cuts to federal CTE funding under the current hold-harmless provision.

Nevada will not be able to adequately fund our thriving CTE programs on 1998 funding levels and we should not be punished simply because we have experienced population growth.

So I joined with Congressman Raul Grijalva, my Democratic committee colleague from Arizona, in introducing the *Career and Technical Education Equity Act* which protects critical CTE funding by requiring states receive at least 90% of the funding amount allocated the previous year.

This bill will protect CTE funding and continue to provide students around Nevada and the nation with opportunities to learn the skills to help them find in-demand jobs. I am hopeful we will discuss the critical question of funding for CTE programs during this hearing.

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U.S. House Committee on Education and the Workforce