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July 6, 2016

The Honorable John Kline
Chairman
Committee on Education and the Workforce
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and the Workforce
2101 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kline and Ranking Member Scott:

On behalf of Opportunity Nation, I am writing in support of H.R. 5587, the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act, introduced by Representatives Thompson (R-PA), Clark (D-MA), Byrne (R-AL), Curbelo (R-FL), Langevin (D-RI) and Nolan (D-MN).

We are pleased that H.R. 5587 was introduced with bipartisan cosponsors and look forward to working with the Committee on updating the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (CTE) to provide students with the academic and technical skills needed to succeed in postsecondary education, training and employment.

Opportunity Nation is a bipartisan, national campaign comprised of more than 350 cross-sector organizations working together to expand economic mobility and close the opportunity gap in America. We promote common sense bipartisan approaches to increase access to education, tackle the skills gap and expand opportunity for young adults. We are committed to the notion that an individual's zip code need not determine his or her destiny and that targeted actions to provide greater opportunity for young Americans under CTE will pay off in long-term economic success for communities and the nation.

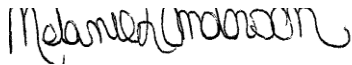
Opportunity Nation supports updates to CTE that will increase alignment, collaboration and coordination among programs of study and various providers; target programming to those most in need; and include innovative strategies and activities to help ensure more students enter the workforce with the skills they need to compete for 21st century jobs. Accordingly, Opportunity Nation supports provisions under H.R. 5587 that would:

- Expand the definition of "programs of study" to ensure that programs include employability skills, are aligned with the needs of local industries, progress from general to more specific content, and have multiple entrance and exit points that incorporate credentialing.
- Authorize State establishment of performance indicators related to attainment of postsecondary credentials or credits.
- Expand dual- or concurrent-enrollment programming, including the addition of a formal definition; authorize State Leadership Activities to provide support for dual- or concurrent-enrollment programs; and establish State performance indicators related to attainment of postsecondary credentials through dual- or concurrent-enrollment programs.

- Ensure that an “out-of-school youth” be included as part of career guidance and counseling activities.
- Continue to focus support on areas of need, including an expansion of the definition of “special populations” to include homeless individuals.
- Support partnerships as eligible entities under the innovation grant program and promote the development of statewide partnerships among LEAs, institutions of higher education and businesses as part of Statewide Leadership Activities.
- Encourage work-based learning activities under the innovation grant program; authorize work-based learning as part of State Leadership Activities; and ensure State establishment of performance indicators that include the number of students participating in work-based learning.
- Authorize the Department of Education to award innovation grants to support strategies and activities to improve CTE and align workforce skills with labor-market needs, via initiatives like pay-for-success, integration of STEM fields-- including computer science education-- with career and technical education.

Thank you for moving forward with CTE reauthorization in a bipartisan manner. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or if Opportunity Nation can be of any assistance in updating the law.

Sincerely,



Melanie Anderson
Director of Government Relations