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August 7, 2017

The Honorable Alexander Acosta  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Labor  
200 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Secretary Acosta:

Thank you for your prompt response to my letter in June regarding oversight of the Job Corps program. However, I continue to have concerns about the safety and security of students participating in the Job Corps program, and I am disappointed the Office of Job Corps decided not to testify at the June 22, 2017, hearing on student safety within the Job Corps program. A representative would have provided the Committee with important information about the program and the measures taken by the Office of Job Corps to address these safety concerns.

The Job Corps program is intended to help some of our nation's most disadvantaged youth receive high-quality education, workforce development, and support services in order to become more employable, responsible, and productive citizens. The very purpose of the program is to serve those who are hard to serve and the first way to accomplish that goal is to protect the safety of students and instructors within the program.

Unfortunately, the evidence demonstrates there are significant safety concerns and, therefore, Congress needs to make sure the Department of Labor (the Department) is providing all students a safe and effective learning environment. Together with Job Corps center operators, the Department is responsible for delivering students such a learning environment. At this time, the Job Corps program has failed to resolve four of the six recommendations suggested by the Department of Labor Office of Inspector General (OIG) in the OIG's 2015 report, "Job Corps Needs to Improve Enforcement and Oversight of Student Disciplinary Policies to Better Protect Students and Staff at Centers." Additionally, the OIG is still assessing whether the Department's actions taken or proposed in response to the OIG's March 2017 report, "Review of Job Corps Center Safety and Security," are sufficient.

It was extremely disturbing to learn that since 2007, Job Corps centers have reported 265 student deaths — including 61 onsite. Moreover, based on preliminary analysis performed by the Government Accountability Office (GAO), there were more than 49,800 serious incidences involving Job Corps students over that time.<sup>1</sup> At the June 22 hearing, GAO testified that this number likely underestimates the actual occurrence of such incidences.

In light of these facts, I expect the Department will continue to notify Congress in the unfortunate event of a Job Corps student's death. Moreover, I also expect the Department will provide my staff with quarterly updates regarding serious incidences within the program. Given the longstanding safety concerns that went unresolved by previous administrations, I hope you will be a partner in efforts to address these concerns. As a beginning to that partnership, and because the Office of Job Corps decided not to testify at the June 22 hearing, I request that you answer the following questions:

1. By what date will the Department resolve the OIG's 2015 recommendations related to student health and safety?
2. Does the Department have the contractual and monitoring tools it needs to ensure Job Corps center operators are providing students with a safe and effective learning environment?
3. What is the current number of bridge and sole-source contracts in use by the Job Corps program? What criteria will the Department use to determine whether a bridge or sole-source contract is appropriate in the future?
4. Why is the Department relying on these contracts, and by what date will all contracts have been awarded on a competitive basis?
5. The Department was creating a list of contingency contractors to run a Job Corps center in the event the operator's contract needed to be revoked. What is the status of this contingency list? What criteria are being used to build this list?
6. How does the Department consider the prior performance of center operators in ensuring a safe learning environment when awarding Job Corps center operator contracts?
7. Does the Department take into consideration research on implementation and best practices in residential interventions as part of the request for proposal process?
8. What requirements does the Department include as part of the request for proposal process for center operators to demonstrate and ensure the competency and capability of center staff?

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<sup>1</sup> *Student Safety in the Job Corps Program: Hearing before the Committee on Education and the Workforce, House of Representatives, 115 Cong. (2017) (Testimony of Cindy Brown Barnes)*

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9. How does population density or number of students at a particular center affect student health and safety outcomes?
10. For the most recent program year, what is the number and percentage of students who leave or are separated from the Job Corps program within 60 days? How would considering these students for purposes of performance affect the performance of individual centers or the program as a whole?
11. Does the Department consider the number or percentage of students who leave or are separated from individual centers or centers operated by an individual contractor when awarding Job Corps center operator contracts?

Thank you for your attention to this letter. In addition to a written response, I request that the Department contact my staff to establish a schedule of regular meetings regarding the efforts of the Department to improve student safety outcomes. If you have any questions, please contact James Redstone ([James.Redstone@mail.house.gov](mailto:James.Redstone@mail.house.gov)) or Jonas Linde ([Jonas.Linde@mail.house.gov](mailto:Jonas.Linde@mail.house.gov)) with the Committee at (202) 225-6558.

Sincerely,



Virginia Foxx  
Chairwoman