

July 6, 2016

The Honorable John Kline
Chair

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Ranking Member

House Committee on Education and the Workforce
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kline and Ranking Member Scott:

On behalf of the nation's 1,108 community colleges, including their presidents and boards of trustees, we write to commend the Education and Workforce Committee for acting to reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE) Act (Perkins Act). In particular, we would like to thank Representatives Thompson and Clark for introducing the bipartisan Strengthening CTE for the 21st Century Act (H.R. 5587).

The Perkins Act provides vital support for community colleges in their core mission of educating the nation's increasingly technically-oriented workforce. It is the largest direct federal funding source for community colleges. H.R. 5587 makes many improvements to the Perkins Act, and we look forward to continue working with the committee to refine its provisions as well as address some outstanding concerns.

We are particularly anxious to ensure that postsecondary Perkins Act funds continue to be focused on the sub-baccalaureate level, as has always been the case. Modifications in the substitute amendment to be offered at markup should restore this policy. We also thank the committee for alterations to the definition of "career and technical education" that ensure it remains applicable to postsecondary CTE programs.

From the beginning of the reauthorization process, our associations have stressed the need for Perkins Act funding to be used to support programs closely aligned with the needs of business and industry. We are pleased that H.R. 5587 reflects this priority. This is done in part by encouraging states and local recipients to better coordinate activities supported by the Perkins Act with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and by requiring needs assessments to guide the expenditure of Perkins funding at the local level.

The postsecondary performance indicators are also better aligned with WIOA's accountability measures, which marks a significant improvement in federal workforce policy. The legislation seeks to provide much-needed consistency in this area by basing the performance indicators on newly-defined "CTE concentrators." We hope to continue working with the committee to refine this definition to ensure that it best captures those students who have shown that they are indeed CTE concentrators through their course-taking behavior.

We are concerned that the bill weakens the maintenance of effort provision that requires states to maintain their investments in CTE. The bill as introduced would allow states to substantially reduce their CTE spending each year and remain eligible to receive Perkins Act funds. States need to be encouraged to sustain their commitment in this critical area. While the substitute amendment improves the MOE provisions, we continue to have concerns in this area.

In our reauthorization recommendations, we supported revising Title II to include a far-reaching program that would support innovative postsecondary CTE programs, working in partnership with business and industry. The bill's \$7.5 million national innovation grants program is not adequately delineated and its limited size would preclude the needed impact. We hope to expand and sharpen this program's focus as reauthorization progresses.

Again, we applaud the progress you have made in reauthorizing this vitally important program, and hope that this markup is a first step in completing the reauthorization this year.

Sincerely,



Walter G. Bumphus
AACC President and CEO



J. Noah Brown
ACCT President and CEO

cc: Members of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce