



December 9, 2025

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, M.D.
Chairman, Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Ranking Member, Committee on Health,
Education, Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tim Walberg
Chairman, Committee on Education and
the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Ranking Member, Committee on Education
and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cassidy, Ranking Member Sanders, Chairman Walberg and Ranking Member Scott,

We write on behalf of the Jobs and Careers Coalition to urge that your committees make reauthorizing the Workforce Opportunity and Innovation Act (WIOA) a priority at the beginning of the 119th Congress's second session. We also recommend using the bipartisan bill that nearly made it to the President's desk at the end of the last Congress, H.R. 6655, A *Stronger Workforce for America Act*, as the template for reauthorizing and reforming the nation's public workforce system.

The Jobs and Careers Coalition is a Washington-based business group focused on job training and workforce development. Members include employers and employer associations from a broad range of industries experiencing skills mismatches and worker shortages – construction, manufacturing, IT, retail, and hospitality, among others.

The past few years have been a turbulent economic time, but one thing has remained constant for our industries. Technological change is unstoppable, and it is transforming the American workplace, driving increased demand for skilled technical workers. The upshot for our businesses: persistent skills mismatches that hinder our ability to meet the needs of our customers or grow the economy.

The employers represented by our coalition saw H.R. 6655 as an important step forward to improve the effectiveness of the public workforce system, drive increased participation by employers, create opportunities for workers, and strengthen the U.S. economy.

Among the provisions of H.R. 6655 we found most promising:

The 50-percent training requirement. The employers represented by our coalition struggle to hire appropriately skilled workers, and many business owners are uncertain where to turn when technology requires them to upskill their existing workforce. H.R. 6655's mandate that 50 percent of the funds allocated to any local workforce area be spent specifically on skills development rather than administration and other costs will ensure that taxpayer dollars are used as effectively as possible to meet employers' urgent and growing training needs.

The industry partnership development fund. Workforce educators, employers, and job seekers have long understood that there can be no effective workforce education without employer input on in-demand skills and industry trends. The employers in our coalition are pleased to see H.R. 6655 encourage and incentivize employer engagement by allowing states to use a portion of their allocation to provide competitive grants for industry partnerships. Employers understand the need for both business and government to have skin in the game, and we believe many businesses will come forward to meet their states' requirements for funding matches.

The critical industries skills fund. Artificial intelligence, industrial robots, and the digital economy are just a few of the developments transforming the American workplace. New businesses are emerging, older firms are racing to keep up, and accelerating competition among cities and states drives a growing need for more flexible and responsive job training. H.R. 6655's critical industries skill fund will help states keep up with the challenges ahead. As a matter of good public policy, our members appreciate the stipulation that training providers be reimbursed only when job seekers complete their training and are employed in the target industry.

The option for expanded incumbent-worker training. Like employers across America struggling to stay abreast of technological change, many businesses represented by our coalition face a growing need to retrain existing workers. Our coalition welcomes the provision of H.R. 6655 that raises the cap on state spending for incumbent-worker training and allows these funds to be spent more flexibly in the geographic areas where they are needed most.

The demonstration grants designed to spur innovation. The employers in our coalition who have tried to make use of the workforce system have often found it wanting – difficult to approach, bureaucratic, hidebound, inattentive to their needs. Quality varies widely, and some local areas serve employers effectively. But others need a thorough overhaul – new thinking, new tools, new approaches and more. Our coalition sees promise in the consolidated innovation grants that will allow some states and local areas to experiment, and we look forward to working with them to develop better tools and tactics.

The new employer performance metric. As the old adage has it, "what gets measured gets improved," and the members of our coalition have long questioned the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act's approach to measuring the workforce system's effectiveness in serving employers. We strongly support the new approach in H.R. 6655: holding local areas accountable for the percentage of workforce system participants enrolled in employer-driven upskilling programs, including on-the-job training and apprenticeship.

Using outcomes metrics to raise the bar for fundable training providers. Members of our coalition who have tried to use the workforce system have often been disappointed by the quality of the training provided to participants with individual training accounts. We are encouraged by the provisions of H.R. 6655 that streamline state eligible-training-provider lists and impose tougher standards on providers, using verified employment outcomes to determine eligibility. We also appreciate the provision that allows employers to sponsor programs for the list and look forward to working with local workforce boards to improve the quality of available training.

Taken together, we strongly believe that these provisions have the potential to make the public workforce system significantly more appealing and effective for employers. Going forward, as in the past, it will take both parties – local workforce authorities and local businesses – to make the partnership work. The *Stronger Workforce for America Act*

includes an array of promising incentives – carrots as well as sticks – to encourage this essential collaboration, and our coalition looks forward to working with local authorities to implement the legislation and encourage uptake by employers.

The start of 119th second session is the perfect time to take up reauthorizing WIOA with the Dept. of Education's transfer of the Office of Postsecondary Education to the Dept. of Labor. The stage for a WIOA bill has also been set with DOL's Assistant Secretary for Employment and Training having been confirmed by the Senate and sworn in to office.

The H.R. 6655 template is the beginning, not the end, of the change that's needed to ensure that all Americans, whatever their age and education level, have access to quality career-connected education and training. But it is an important step – thoughtfully crafted, subtly innovative, attentive to employer needs and the changing American economy. We encourage your respective committees and Congress to pass it and move forward quickly with implementation.

Yours sincerely,

American Supply Association
American Cement Association
Associated Builders and Contractors
Associated Equipment Distributors
Associated General Contractors of America
Association of Nutrition & Foodservice Professionals
Construction Industry Round Table
DC Student Construction Trades Foundation
Gaylor Electric, Inc.
Independent Electrical Contractors
Lupson & Associates LLC
National Center for Construction Education and Research
National Energy & Fuels Institute
National Retail Federation
National Roofing Contractors Association
National Stone, Sand, and Gravel Association
OEM Fabricators, Inc.
Opportunity America
Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors – National Association

Precast/Prestressed Concrete Institute
Tile Roofing Industry Alliance
Tree Care Industry Association

CC: U.S. Senate
U.S. House of Representatives