



July 21, 2023

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Granger, Chairman Aderholt, & Ranking Member DeLauro,

On behalf of the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), the nation's largest not-for-profit association committed to the advancement of education that prepares youth and adults for career success, and Advance CTE, the nation's longest-standing not-for-profit that represents State Directors and leaders responsible for secondary, postsecondary and adult Career and Technical Education (CTE) across all 50 states and U.S. territories, we write to express our concerns with the proposed FY 2024 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill.

We understand and appreciate the challenges in this year's appropriations process. However, the bill recently passed by the Subcommittee would significantly damage numerous workforce and educational programs that would undermine learners' access to quality CTE opportunities. While we appreciate the legislation's recognition of at least sustaining current levels of federal investment in CTE via the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act's (Perkins V) basic state grant program, our organizations are extremely concerned about proposed cuts to other major education and workforce development programs contained elsewhere in the legislation. The significant funding cuts envisioned for many of these programs affect the entire education ecosystem, including CTE students, teachers and programs.

For example, reducing funding by nearly 80 percent for Title I of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) would disproportionately impact learners in most need of additional support while allowing personal or financial circumstances to restrict the educational opportunities available to them. These challenges for students will only be further exacerbated by declining teacher quality as federal resources for training, professional development and recruitment programs are lost with the elimination of several federal investments that support educator preparation, retention, and other important efforts that can help address persistent educator workforce shortages.

At the same time, the legislation proposes the elimination of several workforce development programs overseen by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). In particular, the bill's proposed funding cuts and eliminated programs under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) will close access points to the workforce particularly amongst our nation's most vulnerable populations and further reduce the ability of CTE students to access critical services and supports that they need to be successful in CTE.

Ensuring equitable access to high-quality CTE programs is a top priority of CTE leaders and practitioners. Yet, the significant cuts in federal support for education and workforce development outlined in this legislation will greatly diminish our ability to achieve this. Developing a robust, diverse workforce in every state equipped with in-demand skills that can adapt to the needs of employers requires meaningful and sustained investments in national workforce and education programs.

Without continued investments in foundational education and workforce programs, the business community and industry partners across many fields will not have access to the highly-skilled, 21st-century workforce that they need to meet the needs of their local economies, and leverage the variety of new federal investments in high-need fields, such as infrastructure, semiconductor manufacturing and more. In an already tight labor market for employers, business and industry partners simply cannot afford to continue underinvesting in our nation's education and workforce systems and the millions of learners they serve each year.

We acknowledge and appreciate that support for CTE via Perkins V was level-funded in this proposal. While maintaining this investment is critical to addressing some of these concerns, the larger cuts contained elsewhere in this bill would broadly undermine states, school districts, and institutions' ability to provide high-quality CTE opportunities for all learners. Greater federal resources are still needed for CTE to help meet existing and growing demand for these pathways and programs. CTE is only able to reach its full potential when learners are able to navigate a cohesive career preparation ecosystem with seamless access to pathways and supports needed for success at all stages of a career journey. As our country faces the threat of a severe underinvestment in education, which would make these efforts much more challenging, we call on the committee to reconsider the funding allocations proposed in this bill.

Thank you for considering these suggestions as the FY24 appropriations process continues to move forward. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these recommendations further. Should you wish to do so, please do not hesitate to reach out to ACTE's Government Relations Manager, Jimmy Koch (jkoch@acteonline.org) or Advance CTE's Policy Advisor, Steve Voytek (svoytek@careertech.org).

Sincerely,

LeAnn Curry
Executive Director, ACTE

Kate Creamer
Executive Director, Advance CTE