

October 11, 2013

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chair
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
Committee
United State Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Ranking Member
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bob Casey
Chair
Employment and Workplace Safety
Subcommittee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Johnny Isakson
Ranking Member
Employment and Workplace Safety
Subcommittee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Harkin, Alexander, Casey, Isakson, and Murray:

We commend the Committee for its bipartisan effort to reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), and appreciate your hard work to move the bill through Committee. The undersigned groups strongly believe that WIA reauthorization should be brought to the floor this year. We look forward to working with the Senate to make further improvements to the bill as it moves through the legislative process.

In 2012, nearly 8.5 million individuals received training and other employment services funded under WIA Title I—about a 250 percent increase since the start of the recession in 2008—while many millions more received services or supports through the Wagner-Peyser Employment Services, Adult Education and Family Literacy, and Vocational Rehabilitation programs.

It is vital for Congress to modernize the nation's workforce development system to ensure that individuals at all skill levels are able to obtain the training and education they need to get and keep jobs that lead to economic security, while also ensuring that employers in high-growth and emerging industries are able to find qualified workers to fill current and projected job openings. Today more than 11 million (7.3 percent) U.S. workers are unemployed; it is particularly alarming that nearly 40 percent of those workers have been unemployed for over six months. Despite the workforce system's success in assisting workers in the current economy—WIA Title I programs successfully place close to 6 in 10 clients in employment (or education for youth)—the underlying legislation was written in 1998, a time of 4 percent unemployment.

The workforce development field has made significant advances since WIA was originally authorized in providing employment and training services, including building career pathways to meet the needs of workers at all skill levels and ages; engaging employers to ensure training and adult education is linked to skilled workforce needs; promoting flexible performance measures for youth and young adults; and improving transparency and accountability through better data systems. Congress must act to reauthorize WIA if these best practices are to be reflected in current law.

Furthermore, failure to reauthorize WIA leaves federal job training programs vulnerable to continued funding cuts. Such cuts will lead to disruptions in services, and will impact the ability of our nation's employers to find the skilled workers they need to fill immediate job openings and plan for future growth.

While the organizations signing this letter may not support every provision in the committee-passed bill, we are committed to seeing WIA reauthorized in the 113th Congress. We urge Congress to continue operating on a bipartisan basis to reauthorize WIA and ensure that our nation's workers have the skills they need to get and keep a job, and that employers have access to the skilled workforce they need to compete in the global economy.

Sincerely,

ACT, Inc.

American Association of Community Colleges (AACC)

American Association of University Women (AAUW)

American Society for Training & Development (ASTD)

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO

Aspen Institute Workforce Strategies Initiative

Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE)

Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs (AFOP)

Center for Women Policy Studies

Community Action Partnership

Corporation for a Skilled Workforce (CSW)

Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL)

Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy (CAAL)

Easter Seals

Goodwill Industries International

Insight Center for Community Economic Development

Institute for Asian Pacific American Leadership & Advancement

International Association of Jewish Vocational Services (IAJVS)

Jobs for the Future (JFF)

National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE)

National Association of Counties (NACo)

National Association of Development Organizations (NADO)

National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium
(NASDCTEc)
National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP)
National College Transition Network (NCTN) at World Education, Inc.
National Community Reinvestment Coalition
National Council for Workforce Education (NCWE)
National Employment Law Project (NELP)
National League of Cities
National Skills Coalition
National Transitional Jobs Network (NTJN)
National Workforce Association (NWA)
National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC)
PHI – Quality Care through Quality Jobs
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
The Corps Network
United States Conference of Mayors (USCM)
United Way Worldwide
Young Invincibles
YouthBuild USA