

OPPORTUNITY
AMERICA



Jobs and Careers Coalition

May 25, 2021

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Chairman
Committee on Finance
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo
Ranking Member
Committee on Finance
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo,

I'm writing on behalf of the Opportunity America Jobs and Careers Coalition to express our concerns about the workforce training provisions in the Clean Energy for America Act.

Our members strongly support workforce development programs, including apprenticeship, that equip workers with skills to meet the challenges of changing technology. But we believe that excluding employers from tax benefits based on their approach to workforce training, as the Clean Energy for America Act does, is the wrong public policy to address workforce needs and would ultimately be counterproductive to the goals of the legislation.

The Opportunity America 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 – IT, manufacturing, construction, retail and hospitality, among others.

The Clean Energy for America Act uses the tax code to mandate that only employers who hire workers from registered apprenticeship programs are eligible for certain tax benefits. The bill requires construction contractors who receive benefits to guarantee that 15 percent of the work they undertake is performed by registered apprentices. It also imposes requirements as to how apprenticeship programs should be structured.

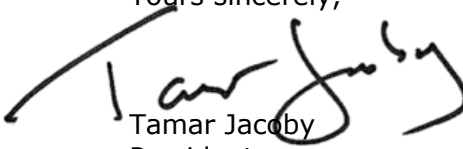
These are unprecedented mandates likely to be unattainable even for many employers who support and promote apprenticeship training. Registered apprenticeship is not the right fit for all employers or workers; many prefer alternate training models better suited to their needs and schedules. We believe the 15 percent goal for construction contractors is particularly misguided, likely to be out of reach for a large number of firms.

Before the Covid economic shock, the construction industry was experiencing a historic workforce crisis – worker shortages and skills mismatches expected to plague the sector for years to come. Many of these challenges remain, despite the pandemic.

The contractors we represent are strongly supportive of a wide variety of workforce development initiatives, including apprenticeship and increased investments in career and technical education, because these programs prepare workers for careers, not because the employer will qualify for a tax benefit. Indeed, many employers, especially small businesses, cannot bear the added costs and complexity required to qualify for a tax credit.

The Senate Finance Committee should reject the exclusionary apprenticeship requirements in the Clean Energy for America Act and focus instead on positive incentives for apprenticeship and on supporting career and technical education programs with a proven track record of preparing workers for high-paying, high-demand jobs.

Yours sincerely,



Tamar Jacoby
President