

OPPORTUNITY
AMERICA



Jobs and Careers Coalition

February 3, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
US House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
US House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy,

I'm writing on behalf of the Opportunity America Jobs and Careers Coalition to express our support for apprenticeship but also our concern about the draft of the National Apprenticeship Act that is currently moving through the House. Amendment #29, proposed by Rep. French Hill and made in order by the Rules Committee, would help assuage our concerns, and we urge members to support it.

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 that experience skills mismatches and worker shortages – IT, manufacturing, construction, retail and hospitality, among others.

The employer associations in our coalition strongly support the apprenticeship model – indeed many are assisting their members in moving to implement it.

We see much to appreciate in the National Apprenticeship Act, including its professed concern for streamlining and simplifying the registration process, the resources it provides for technical assistance and the incentives for employers and intermediaries working to launch apprenticeship programs.

But we also have concerns about the legislation: about the scope of training it authorizes and what we see as its onerous reporting requirements, among other issues. We are disappointed that these concerns have not been addressed since we first raised them nearly a year ago and troubled by the way the legislation is being fast-tracked through the Congress.

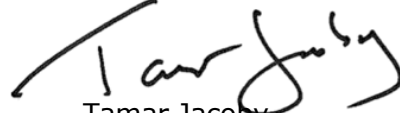
More distressing still, we fail to understand the rationale for the bill's deliberately ambiguous language about what entities will be eligible for Title II grants and whether or not such entities will be required to "partner with a labor or joint labor management organization."

The nation is struggling to emerge from a historic public health crisis and a period of prolonged economic uncertainty. Full recovery will require dynamism and sustained growth in all sectors of the economy. The pandemic is driving dramatic change across national and regional labor markets, and employers in many sectors are likely to face challenging skills mismatches – mismatches for which apprenticeship is often the best remedy.

But as is, without the change stipulated by Amendment #29, this ambiguous provision of the bill would exclude entire swaths of the economy from federal incentives and assistance that could help spur the growth of apprenticeship programs.

We are eager to see apprenticeship elevated as a national priority and brought to scale across all sectors of the economy. We look forward to working with Congress on a bipartisan basis to advance public policy that encourages and incentivizes employers in all industries to launch and expand earn-and-learn training.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tamar Jacoby". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning.

Tamar Jacoby
President