



**Oral Testimony of
Kimberly Green, Executive Director**

**Hearing on “The Role of Career & Technical Education in Creating a Skilled
Workforce: Perspectives from Employers and Stakeholders”**

Thank you Representatives Thompson, Kelly, Perry and State Senator Blake for the opportunity to be with you today and for your leadership and steadfast support of Career Technical Education (CTE).

My name is Kimberly Green. I serve as the Executive Director for the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTE) and it is my honor to share these remarks with you today on behalf of our members – the state leadership who have the responsibility for secondary, postsecondary and adult CTE programs found in nearly every community across the nation.

CTE has a critically important role in developing the skilled workforce necessary to keep our nation economically competitive. Today, more than ever, the spotlight is being shown on CTE as a proven strategy that engages students, aligns talent with opportunity, and ensures preparation for the workforce and further education.

In 2010, our membership, in partnership with other national stakeholders, committed to a bold vision to guide the future of CTE. The goal was to honor and build upon the historical strengths of the system and identify areas in transition for further support– all ultimately designed to ensure that CTE programs meet the needs of the youth, adults and employers of our country both today and tomorrow.

The vision is framed by five interconnected principles:

1. CTE is critical to ensuring that the United States leads in global competitiveness.
2. CTE actively partners with employers to design and provide high-quality, dynamic programs.
3. CTE prepares students to succeed in further education and careers.
4. CTE is delivered through comprehensive programs of study aligned to the National Career Clusters Framework.
5. CTE is a results-driven system that demonstrates a positive return on investment.

These five principles serve as the foundation for our thinking about future priorities in federal CTE legislation. The other major driver was to acknowledge the transformation the system must go through over the next decade or so. CTE has steadily been moving away from a narrowly focused program that prepares students for a single job out of high school towards a new model that more

fully integrates academic and technical skill instruction to prepare students for a wider array of career opportunities and lifelong learning. Central to this evolution has been the principal federal investment in these programs—the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins).

While Perkins has played a substantial role in supporting this transformation, we believe it can do more to have an even greater impact system wide. As such, our organization’s approach to the next reauthorization of the Perkins Act has been to affirm what works and change what isn’t, as well as create the space for an investment in innovation.

Specifically, we recommend refocusing the core purpose of the legislation to support more rigorous and coherent CTE program delivery through high-quality programs of study; significantly streamline the current allowable uses of Perkins funds to promote greater coordination between planning and spending while retaining state and local flexibility; establish more coherent expectations to hold programs accountable and drive continual program improvement; and more effectively recognize and build upon the important contributions employers make to the overall CTE enterprise.

As employers struggle to find the skilled workers needed to fill millions of job vacancies throughout the country, it is critical that CTE play a larger role in expanding the nation’s talent pipeline. The value of partnerships between CTE and employers is clear — students gain invaluable experience from employers; employers stand to benefit from a more highly-skilled workforce; and programs can be more responsive and reflective of the modern workplace.

Future Perkins legislation must strike a balance between the immediate labor needs of employers and the projected needs of the wider economy in the years to come. In doing so, the best interests of students, programs and employers can all be taken more fully into account.

In addition to more direct connections with the business community, one of the most promising innovations introduced by Perkins was the concept of programs of study. At present, Perkins requires local recipients of federal funds to offer at least one program of study— a CTE delivery model that Perkins currently defines as a sequence of non-duplicative CTE courses that are designed to link secondary and postsecondary programs and lead to an industry-recognized credential, certification, or an associate’s or baccalaureate degree.

Here in Pennsylvania, the Students Occupationally and Academically Ready or SOAR program, is built upon this delivery model.¹ Currently, SOAR programs prepare students for “High Priority Occupations” that have direct links to the high demand, high skill, high wage, and high growth areas outlined in current Perkins statute. Pennsylvania’s approach to programs of study is characteristic of how the Perkins Act has supported a strong state leadership role in the development and implementation of these programs, ensuring that they are tailored to the unique needs of their respective economies and reflect the state’s broader workforce and education strategy.

We have seen great success with this framework throughout the country— students enrolled in programs of study tend to have better academic outcomes, earn more STEM and Advanced Placement credits, take fewer remedial courses at the postsecondary level, and are more likely to persist in the same field of study at the postsecondary level than their peers who are not enrolled in a

¹ http://www.education.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/programs_of_study/7686

program of study.² Due to course sequences in programs of study, students participating in this framework usually take three or more CTE courses at the secondary level. Seventy-five percent of these students or “CTE concentrators” go on to enroll in postsecondary education within two years of graduating high school.³

Nonetheless, the degree to which programs of study have been implemented varies considerably from state to state because of the minimum requirements outlined in current statute. From our perspective, the Perkins Act should be refocused to support *only* programs of study and a more rigorous definition for their design should be introduced in future legislation.

Doing so will more clearly lay out expectations for CTE program design and will establish reporting and accountability requirements around a program of study framework and inject more clarity into the expected outcomes for these programs. Importantly future Perkins legislation should ensure that students from all backgrounds, regardless of their zip code or underserved population status, have access to these high-quality CTE programs, making it easier to address achievement gaps among and within these populations.

These are just a few of the recommendations our organization has with regards to the reauthorization of the Perkins Act and we’d like to submit for your consideration our organization’s full set of recommendations for this legislation.

Thank you all again for the opportunity to share with you our organization’s perspective on CTE and the role a newly reauthorized Perkins Act can have in ensuring a skilled workforce for our nation.

² http://www.nrccte.org/sites/default/files/publication-files/nrccte_cte_programs_of_study_career_pathways.pdf
http://www.nrccte.org/sites/default/files/publication-files/nrccte_mature_pos_final.pdf

³ <http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/sectech/nacte/career-technical-education/interim-report.pdf>

APPENDIX A:

**Recommendations for the Reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical
Education Act**

National Association of State Director of Career Technical Education Consortium



Recommendations for the Reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act

The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins) supports Career Technical Education (CTE) programs by strengthening connections between secondary and postsecondary education, aligning to the needs of the economy, and improving the academic and technical achievement of students who choose to enroll in these programs.

The National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTEc) believes that the federal investment in CTE legislation, Perkins, should be strengthened by re-examining and re-framing the law to ensure equitable access to high-quality CTE programs of study and to better position CTE to help build the solutions needed to close the skills gap and improve student achievement. Therefore, NASDCTEc believes that federal CTE legislation needs a clearer focus and that its purpose should be ***“to develop the academic and CTE skills of students to ensure America's global competitiveness through programs of study, partnerships with employers, and further education and careers.”*** These recommendations seek to accomplish this purpose and promote innovation, accountability, and equitable access to high-quality CTE that meet the needs of our nation's students and employers.

Global Competitiveness

- ***Link CTE to labor market*** – States are in the best position to determine how CTE can meet the demands of their state and regional economies. Federal CTE funds should only support high-quality CTE programs of study that meet two or more of the following criteria: high wage, high skill, high demand, or high growth. Definitions of these terms should account for varying state and regional economic conditions and labor market needs.
- ***Rigorous standards*** – Consistent, quality benchmarks for students in CTE programs of study, regardless of where students live or which delivery system they use, are essential. Federal CTE legislation should require all CTE programs of study to align to rigorous content standards that are national in scope, are informed by the needs of the workplace, and ensure excellence. NASDCTEc believes that federal CTE legislation should encourage state adoption of rigorous college- and career-ready standards, such as those found in the Common Core State Standards and the [Common Career Technical Core](#).¹ Increased consistency and rigor in CTE programs of study will better equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in a global economy.
- ***Innovation funding*** – The next federal CTE legislation should focus on improving student outcomes through innovative approaches and programmatic improvement. The next federal CTE legislation should allocate new formula funding, above and beyond the basic state grant, to states to incentivize innovative practices and solutions at the state and local levels. Successful innovations should be scaled up using the basic state grant funds.

Partnerships

- ***Partnerships with business and industry*** – Strong partnerships between the CTE community and business and industry are essential to high-quality CTE programs of study. Federal CTE legislation should require local advisory committees comprised of employers and education stakeholders who will actively partner to design and deliver CTE programs of study and provide assistance in the form of curricula, standards, certifications, work-based learning opportunities, teacher/faculty externships, equipment, etc. States should have the flexibility to structure local advisory committees in a way that best meets the needs of their state (in terms of governance, funding, geographic and other influencing factors).
- ***Consortia*** – Coordination and collaboration between secondary and postsecondary partners is essential and must be improved. The federal CTE legislation should incentivize consortia of secondary and postsecondary eligible entities to better facilitate coordination and transitions between learner levels. States should have the flexibility to structure consortia in a way that best meets the needs of their state in terms of governance, funding, and geographic factors.

Preparation for Education and Careers

- ***School counseling and career planning*** - Comprehensive counseling, including career and academic counseling, should be expanded and offered no later than middle school. Federal CTE legislation should provide greater support for career counseling, including all students having an individual learning plan that includes the student’s academic and careers goals, documents progress towards completion of the credits required to graduate from their secondary program, and indicates the requisite knowledge, skills and work-based learning experiences necessary for career success. These plans should be actively managed by students, parents, and school-level personnel and should extend into postsecondary education to ensure successful transitions to the workplace.

Programs of Study

- ***High-quality CTE programs*** – Federal CTE legislation should focus on promoting excellence in CTE. To that end, NASDCTEc believes that more specificity is needed to define elements that are necessary to ensuring high-quality programs. Research by the National Research Center for Career and Technical Educationⁱⁱ underscores our recommendation that federal funding should be delivered through rigorous programs of study, as defined by the Office of Vocational and Adult Education’s 10 component framework.ⁱⁱⁱ The law should emphasize strategies that improve alignment between secondary and postsecondary systems, such as statewide articulation agreements, transcribed postsecondary credits, and stackable credentials. High-quality CTE programs should also expose students to employment and leadership opportunities, for instance, through work-based learning and participation in Career Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs). Federal funds should be distributed only to state-approved, rigorous CTE programs of study.

Research and Accountability

- **Accountability measures** – Strong accountability measures are critical to demonstrating CTE’s positive return on investment. The current CTE performance indicators should be re-evaluated to ensure that they provide the feedback necessary for program evaluation and improvement, as well as document CTE’s impact on students’ academic and technical achievement. Federal CTE legislation should require common definitions and measures across the states, as well as allow for alignment of performance measures across related education and workforce programs.
- **Research and professional development** – Research and evaluation are important guideposts for directing practitioners toward effective practices and guiding state decisions on CTE. Federal CTE legislation should support the continuation of a National Research Center for Career and Technical Education to support CTE educators and leaders through leadership development, quality research, professional development, dissemination, and technical assistance.

State Leadership and Governance

- **State flexibility** – States should have the flexibility to determine the allocation of funds between secondary and postsecondary education. Funding should be awarded to a single eligible agency as defined in current law. Additionally, states should be given the flexibility to use the reserve fund to implement a performance-based funding system.
- **State administration and leadership** – Strong state leadership is critical to ensuring that states have the data systems, standards, and partnerships to oversee the development and implementation of high-quality CTE programs of study. Adequate resources for state leadership and state administration, including maintaining the state administrative match, are necessary to ensure effective program administration and equitable access to high-quality CTE programs of study.

The National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTE) represents state and territory leaders of CTE through leadership and advocacy that supports an innovative and rigorous CTE system that prepares students for both college and careers. CTE State Directors lead the planning and implementation of CTE in their respective states and these recommendations reflect their priorities.

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ⁱ National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium, Common Career Technical Core, <http://www.careertech.org/career-technical-education/cctc/>

ⁱⁱ Shumer, R., Stringfield, S., Stipanovic, N., & Murphy, N. (2011, November). *Programs of study: A cross-study examination of programs in three states*. Louisville, KY: National Research Center for Career and Technical Education, University of Louisville. http://www.nrccte.org/sites/default/files/publication-files/nrccte_pos_crossstudy.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, “Career and Technical Programs of Study: A Design Framework.” The 10 components are: (1) legislation and policies, (2) partnerships, (3) professional development, (4) accountability and evaluation systems, (5) college and career readiness standards, (6) course sequences, (7) credit transfer agreements, (8) guidance counseling and academic advisement, (9) teaching and learning strategies, and (10) technical skills assessments.