

## RECOMMENDATIONS PERKINS CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION ACT

**Alignment.** Educators, employers and policymakers agree, a key requirement of effective career and technical education is alignment with local and regional economic needs. CTE should prepare students for in-demand jobs in growing sectors, and educators should work closely with employers to ensure that students are learning what they need to know to be successful in these jobs. The difficult question is *how* exactly to drive this sort of alignment, and we believe it requires a variety of mechanisms – there is no one size that fits all and no one stratagem that will work in every state, for every industry and every type of business, large and small.

Accordingly, we would like to see a reauthorized Perkins Act encourage states to develop a variety of mechanisms to guarantee better alignment and more effective engagement between employers and educators. In some cases, the best approach will be an active and engaged Perkins advisory council. In other situations, a robust and effective workforce investment board may obviate the need for a duplicative mechanism like a Perkins advisory council. In still other instances, the best approach may be one-to-one business training partnerships or sectoral partnerships.

Our recommendation for Perkins reauthorization: that it give states a number of options for engineering better alignment, that it require states to report on the mechanisms they put in place for this purpose and also document the ways in which state education authorities consult with business and industry – but that the act stop short of mandating one particular mechanism or tying the hands of state authorities as they experiment to find the most effective ways to consult with employers and align CTE with local economic needs.

**Work-based learning.** We strongly endorse the concept of work-based learning. There's no question – it's an essential element of effective CTE. The challenge for a reauthorized Perkins Act: to define work-based learning in such a way that it encompasses all the many different kinds of arrangements in use across the spectrum of industries that can and should be cooperating with local education authorities to provide CTE.

Classic work-based learning involves sustained interactions between students and industry professionals in real workplace settings – interactions designed to foster first-hand, in-depth engagement with the tasks required in a given career field. But just as valuable and among the options we believe should be included in the definition: work experience and training in simulated work environments, job shadowing, mentored work hours, internship and apprenticeship, registered and non-registered.

**Industry recognized credentials**. We know of few better ways to ensure that students are learning what they need to know to be successful on the job than CTE that prepares them to qualify for industry recognized credentials – and we would like to see a reauthorized Perkins Act take strong, effective steps to spur the development and acceptance of industry recognized credentials.

Accordingly, we recommend that the act distinguish between industry credentials and other postsecondary awards such as associate degrees and baccalaureate degrees. Rather than include all of these attainments in the same paragraph as a general basket of credentials to be promoted and encouraged as part of effective CTE, we would like to see the act include language that spurs the use of industry credentials in a more specific, targeted way – in a separate, stand-alone paragraph of the bill. We believe this will create a much stronger incentive to develop and adopt meaningful industry credentials – one of the simpler but more effective ways a reauthorized act can drive the development of quality career and technical education aligned with economic needs.

## Associated Builders and Contractors

Associated General Contractors

The Boeing Company

The Building Industry Policy Roundtable

IBM

Independent Electrical Contractors

Leading Builders of America

National Restaurant Association

National Roofing Contractors Association

**Opportunity America** 

The Opportunity America Jobs and Careers Coalition is a Washington-based business coalition 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 and hospitality, among others.