



June 4, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
HELP Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
HELP Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Alexander,

We members of the Opportunity America Jobs and Careers Coalition are writing to express our support for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. This legislation has the potential to trigger dramatic and long-needed changes to the nation's workforce training system, creating incentives for employers to engage more actively and ensuring that training prepares workers more effectively for existing, in-demand jobs.

The Opportunity America Jobs and Careers Coalition is a relatively new group bringing together employers and employer associations from across a range of industries experiencing skills mismatches and worker shortages: construction, manufacturing, hospitality, healthcare and IT, among others. We have come together as a group to highlight the need for better workforce training and drive a skills agenda on Capitol Hill.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act makes needed improvements to virtually every aspect of the workforce system from its broad national architecture to the smallest details on the ground. We are particularly pleased by what we see as three core pillars of the legislation.

WIOA will refocus federally funded workforce training not just to teach skills, but to prepare workers for real jobs – existing jobs, jobs in growing industries and jobs coming online in years ahead as a result of state and local economic development plans. At the state and local levels and in every program to receive funding, the focus is on in-demand occupations, in-demand skills, real-world job opportunities and real-time business needs.

Second, at the state and local levels and at every possible decision point, the legislation allows priority consideration for training that leads to industry-recognized credentials. There is no better way to guarantee that trainees emerge prepared for in-demand jobs – no better way to meet pressing business needs or guarantee workers' future employment prospects.

Third and perhaps most important, WIOA creates significantly enhanced incentives and opportunities for employers to participate in designing and providing training – incentives to offer training themselves, to partner with institutions of higher learning that provide training and to serve in more meaningful and constructive ways on the state and local bodies that plan and oversee training. Educators, employers and policymakers increasingly agree: employer engagement is vital – *the* key to effective,

up-to-date workforce development. The new legislation offers a varied and welcome menu of ways for employers and employer associations to engage more actively.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act is an important step forward – long-overdue reform of a broken system that could be doing much more to meet the needs of employers and potential employees and to spur broad economic growth. We appreciate your attention to this essential matter and look forward to working with Congress to ensure timely passage.

Sincerely,

Cianbro
Gaylor Electric, Inc.
IBM

Aerospace Industries Association
American Hotel & Lodging Association
Associated Builders and Contractors
Associated General Contractors of America
American Staffing Association
Independent Electrical Contractors
International Franchise Association
Leading Builders of America
National Electrical Contractors Association
National Retail Federation
National Roofing Contractors Association
Opportunity America
Outdoor Amusement Business Association
Retail Industry Leaders Association
Specialty Equipment Market Association