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Jobs and Careers Coalition

HOUSE UPDATES THE PERKINS ACT

On May 4, the House Committee on Education and the Workforce introduced legislation to reform and reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. Renamed the *Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act*, the bill was sponsored by House CTE Caucus co-chair Rep. Glenn Thompson (R-PA) and Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL). Reps. Bradley Byrne (R-AL), Lloyd Smucker (R-PA), Drew Ferguson (R-GA), James Langevin (D-RI), Katharine Clark (D-MA) and Rick Nolan (D-MN) cosponsored the measure.

Among provisions of particular interest to employers, the legislation:

- Establishes funding levels for five years, starting at \$1.13 billion in FY 2017 and increasing to \$1.21 billion in FY 2022.
- Improves the alignment of career education with in-demand jobs by requiring more robust consultation with business and industry, including industry and sector partnerships.
- Encourages stronger engagement with employers in setting state performance goals and assessing skills in demand at the local level.
- Incentivizes programs that lead to attainment of “recognized postsecondary credentials,” including industry-recognized certifications.
- Incentivizes programs that incorporate work-based learning and dual enrollment in postsecondary education and training.
- Incentivizes programs that prepare students for high-skill, high-wage, in-demand occupations.
- Incentivizes use of labor market information in planning educational offerings.
- Gives states more flexibility to use federal funding to meet state and local education needs, including by limiting federal intervention and oversight of state activity.
- Expands state reserve funds and directs that they be used to foster innovation or support programs that prepare students for in-demand industries and occupations. (Now 10 percent of the total allocated to each state for local programs, the funds would grow to 15 percent.)

- Creates small state-run competitive grant programs to foster bottom-up innovation and better align career education with labor market needs, including potentially by working with industry and expanding opportunities for work-based learning.
- Eliminates existing requirements that states negotiate performance targets with the U.S. Department of Education, replacing that with a process by which states set their own performance goals and publicly report their progress on streamlined performance metrics.
- Requires greater alignment between each state's CTE strategy and its WIOA strategy.
- Allows states to submit a "combined plan" for using Perkins funding and WIOA funding.
- Strengthens alignment between Perkins postsecondary performance measures and WIOA performance measures – employment outcomes, median earnings and attainment of recognized postsecondary credentials, among other metrics.

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.