



December 10, 2017

The Honorable Virginia Foxx  
Chairwoman  
Committee on Education and the Workforce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Brett Guthrie  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Reps. Foxx and Guthrie,

We write on behalf of the Opportunity America Jobs and Careers Coalition to thank you for initiating a long-overdue debate on reform and reauthorization of the Higher Education Act of 1965.

H.R. 4508, the Promoting Real Opportunity, Success and Prosperity through Education Reform Act, lays out a bold, ambitious vision for realigning higher education with 21st-century labor market needs, preparing workers for a range of in-demand jobs and bringing market discipline to a realm where it has been sorely lacking.

The Opportunity America Jobs and Careers Coalition is a Washington-based business coalition focused on career education and workforce development. Members include employers and employer associations from a broad range of industries experiencing skills mismatches and worker shortages – IT, manufacturing, construction, retail and hospitality, among others.

Business and industry have a fundamental stake in the legislation's overarching goals: making sure the nation's investments in higher education are as productive as possible and holding schools accountable for student outcomes while leaving room for innovation and variety in how to produce those results. There's no trade-off here: what's good for students is also good for business and for the U.S. economy – workers with the skills needed to fill high-demand, high-paying jobs. And we are encouraged to see the committee putting these goals front and center.

As employers who rely on workers with technical skills and those best learned on the job in the workplace, members of the coalition have a particular interest in the provisions of the act that provide new funding and incentives for workforce education.

We are particularly encouraged by the provisions that:

- Expand the Federal Work Study Program and open the way to more extensive private-sector involvement in work-study initiatives that provide students with opportunities for work-based learning aligned with classroom instruction.
- Create incentives for industry-led earn-and-learn initiatives that prepare students for high-wage, high-skill, high-demand jobs.
- Open the way to collaborations in which an institution of higher education contracts with an employer or employer association to provide up to 100 percent of the instruction offered by a credit-bearing educational program eligible for federal financial aid.
- Make Pell Grants more flexible to help low-income students pay for shorter courses and competency-based programs, both of which are often career-focused.
- Open the way to pay-for-success contracts between institutions of higher education and other entities, including potentially employers and employer associations, preparing students for the workplace.

No one understands better than our members: there can be no effective workforce education without employers – it's the only way to guarantee that students are learning skills in demand in today's workplace. The employers we represent are eager to shoulder their part in meeting this challenge, and we welcome the opportunities for collaboration with institutions of higher education that the PROSPER Act would provide.

Members of the Jobs and Careers Coalition salute the leadership of the Committee on Education and the Workforce for laying out a bold, clear vision of the reforms needed to align higher education with changing labor market demand, meeting the needs of students, employers and U.S. economic competitiveness. We look forward to working with the committee and others in both chambers of Congress to enact legislation that incorporates these principles and meets these goals – a higher education system that works for the economy of today and tomorrow.

Yours sincerely,

Aerospace Industries Association

American Hotel & Lodging Association

American Staffing Association

Associated Builders and Contractors

Associated General Contractors

Association of Nutrition & Foodservice Professionals

The Building Industry Policy Roundtable

Construction Industry Round Table

Independent Electrical Contractors  
International Franchise Association  
Leading Builders of America  
National Association of Home Builders  
The National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER)  
National Council of Chain Restaurants  
National Restaurant Association  
National Retail Federation  
National Roofing Contractors Association  
National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association  
Opportunity America  
Partnership for Air-Conditioning, Heating & Refrigeration Accreditation  
Partnership for New York City  
Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors Association  
  
ASI System Integration  
Gaylor Electric, Inc.  
IBM  
Lupson & Associates LLC  
Realityworks, Inc.  
S & B Engineers and Constructors, Ltd.  
Shapiro & Duncan, Inc.