



December 11, 2023

The Honorable Bernie Sanders  
Chair  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions  
United States Senate  
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bill Cassidy  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions  
United States Senate  
Washington D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Sanders and Ranking Member Cassidy,

On behalf of the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), the nation's largest not-for-profit association committed to the advancement of education that prepares youth and adults for career success, and Advance CTE, the nation's longest-standing not-for-profit that represents State Directors and leaders responsible for secondary, postsecondary and adult Career and Technical Education (CTE) across all 50 states and U.S. territories, we are writing in strong support of S. 3392, the Advancing Research in Education Act (AREA)—legislation that would reauthorize and make important updates to the Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA). If enacted, this bipartisan legislation would improve the research and data functions carried out by federal agencies in support of the full education and workforce development continuum, including CTE programs found throughout the country.

Historically, CTE programs and the important questions that could help CTE leaders and practitioners better serve learners have often been underrepresented in rigorous research and data collection efforts. While federal agencies have begun to shift more focus toward CTE research and data collection in recent years, there is more than can be done. We are pleased that S. 3392 takes steps to further address the needs of CTE programs and put more emphasis on structures and systems that will help stakeholders across the education and workforce systems gather and share the data they need to make informed decisions.

For example, having better data on the full range of student education and labor market outcomes can help to shape future investments in programs, improve the development of curriculum and delivery of instruction, and improve supports for learners as they navigate an increasingly complex economy that is undergoing dramatic changes. ACTE and Advance CTE are especially encouraged to note the following provisions contained in AREA that support these wider goals and objectives:

- Usage of common terminology and definitions from the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins V) to ensure alignment and coordination;
- An explicit focus on postsecondary education, workforce development, and CTE as specific research topics for the National Center for Education Research's development centers and as priorities in the Institute for Education Sciences' data collection and statistics efforts;

- The provision and coordination of technical assistance to support the implementation of Perkins V and other important federal education and workforce development legislation;
- Promoting voluntary guidelines to standardize data and information and ensure interoperability which would greatly increase the utility and usability of this information for a variety of stakeholders; and
- Significant and much-needed reforms to the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) grant program, including a more explicit incorporation of workforce data and related labor market outcomes, especially as it relates to the generation of accurate and timely data needed to support the implementation of Perkins V and other critical federal education and workforce development legislation.

Encouragingly, there were many other aspects of S. 3392 that ACTE and Advance CTE were pleased to note, and we are incredibly grateful for the time and energy the committee has devoted to reauthorizing ESRA so far. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to advance this important proposal and look forward to its enactment.

Sincerely,



LeAnn Curry  
Executive Director  
ACTE



Kate Kreamer  
Executive Director  
Advance CTE