

Dear Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro:

We are writing to respectfully request increased funding for the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins) in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill. We urge you to consider the positive impact that Perkins Act state grant funding has on millions of Career and Technical Education (CTE) students across the United States, as well as its value to the business community, which relies on these programs for a skilled and career-ready workforce.

We are grateful that Perkins state grants were funded at \$1.44 billion in FY24 and FY25, an increase of \$10 million each year over the FY23 level. However, adjusted for inflation, FY24 levels are roughly half of the amount of the federal investment made in CTE in 1980, despite the fact that a record number of CTE students – more than 12 million nationwide – rely on this funding at the secondary and postsecondary level.

The House Education and the Workforce Committee has long recognized the importance of strong dedicated Perkins funding. In the 113th Congress, Perkins was intentionally exempted from efforts to consolidate program funding under the bipartisan *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act*. In 2015, CTE programs were explicitly left out of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* in recognition of the importance of direct and targeted investment in CTE. More recently, Congress recognized CTE as an effective workforce development and educational strategy when it passed the *Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act*, reauthorizing Perkins in July 2018 (Public Law No. 115-224).

In the past decades, the American economy has undergone a dramatic series of transformations. Employers of all sizes are increasingly seeking individuals with specialized skills and career competencies in order to thrive in a rapidly evolving job market. With the emergence of new, disruptive technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, this new American economy is demanding higher levels of foundational skills from its workers, including creativity and innovation, the ability to think critically, to collaborate, and solve complex problems. These skill requirements cut across every occupation and industry sector and are now a prerequisite for career and life success.

Put simply, jobs in our economy are changing and our education and training systems must keep pace for America to remain geopolitically competitive. A commitment to high-quality CTE is key to address this challenge and is central to rebuilding the American economy and empowering every student and worker. CTE has established itself as a path that many high-achieving students choose in pursuit of industry certifications and hands-on skills they can use right out of high school, in skills-based education programs, or in college. In fact, the four-year graduation rate for high school students in career and technical education programs is 96 percent – far higher than the national average of 85 percent. Research also shows that CTE has a significant impact on students' academic performance, employability, and lifetime earnings.

We are hopeful your Subcommittee will continue this bipartisan commitment to Perkins in FY26. As CTE programs evolve to meet the needs of employers in high-wage, high-skill, or in-demand career fields such as skilled trades, healthcare, and information technology, we must provide strong federal support for these successful programs.

CTE equips students with the academic, technical, and employability skills necessary for success not only in these fields but also in further postsecondary education. As the sole federal investment in CTE, the Perkins state grant funding is key to their continued success. We therefore respectfully urge increased support for the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act's state grant program in FY26.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.