

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

R. BRUCE JOSTEN  
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT  
GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20062-2000  
202/463-5310

January 14, 2014

The Honorable John Kline  
Chairman  
Committee on Education and the Workforce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable George Miller  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Education and the Workforce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kline and Ranking Member Miller:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the world's largest business federation representing the interests of more than three million businesses of all sizes, sectors and regions, as well as state and local chambers and industry associations, and dedicated to promoting, protecting, and defending America's free enterprise system, supports the Committee on Education and the Workforce's recent interest in reauthorizing the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act.

Employers throughout the U.S. are struggling to find skilled workers who can contribute to their economic growth and competitiveness. A persistent and debilitating skills gap continues to negatively impact our national economy and contributes toward an unemployment rate that remains too high. It is estimated that by 2020 the skills gap will increase to 5 million unfilled positions, largely in the middle-skill occupations. If employers throughout the U.S. are to maintain their economic competitiveness, education and training programs will need to address the needs of employers. The Perkins Act is widely recognized as an important resource in helping connect the education system to the needs of the business community.

The Perkins Act provides over \$1 billion in federal funding to states to support career and technical education programs in high schools, community colleges, and related institutions across the country. These funds leverage significant state resources and partnerships that integrate academic and career programs, upgrade the skills of educators, and provide much needed equipment that supports students in exploring their career interests. More importantly, the Perkins Act is often the vehicle by which education partners are able to connect to the needs of local employers.

While the Perkins Act has made important contributions to supporting career readiness, closing the ever-widening skills gap requires a renewed emphasis on career preparation programs and a rethinking of priorities moving forward. The Chamber supports a Perkins Act reauthorization that focuses on the following priorities:

- Strengthen real and meaningful business engagement;

- Improve secondary and postsecondary linkages and expand early college opportunities;
- Emphasize integrated academics and prioritize work-based learning to ensure student career readiness;
- Promote program innovation and the leveraging of promising practices such as competency-based learning, massive open online courses, pay-for-performance, and new partnership models;
- Demand an accountable and data-driven system that rewards success; and
- Ensure program completion results in credentials that are stackable and industry-aligned.

The Chamber recognizes the dedication and work of the Committee to improve college and career readiness for all students and stands ready to support renewed efforts at enhancing the quality and reach of career and technical education. The Chamber hopes to engage in further conversations about the opportunities that can be made available through reauthorization of the Perkins Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Bruce Josten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "R." and last name "Josten" being the most prominent parts.

R. Bruce Josten

cc: Members of the Committee on Education and the Workforce