



April 8, 2024

To Members of the U.S. House of Representatives

As members of the Workforce Transformation Coalition, we the undersigned urge you to vote in favor of H.R. 6655, “A Stronger Workforce for America Act,” which would not only reauthorize the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) but also modernize the nation’s workforce development and education system to meet the realities and demands of today’s labor market.

The Workforce Transformation Coalition is a newly formed coalition led by the National Association of State Chambers (NASC) and Littler Mendelson’s Workplace Policy Institute (WPI). NASC is the largest nationwide association of state chambers focused on state action, with a combined membership of over 150,000 businesses, representing all types and sizes. NASC members represent the entire Fortune 500, which employ over 50% of the total private sector workforce in America. WPI, the government relations and public policy arm of Littler, advocates for the interests of employers on a global scale by defining and shaping workplace policies that have critical implications on business operations and future growth. The coalition is focused on elevating workforce development as a national priority by advancing comprehensive, ambitious, federal and state policy agendas to strengthen workforce competitiveness and pathways to opportunity.

The state of the U.S. workforce is at an inflection point. Amid continuing economic recovery and uncertainties, including inflationary pressures and wars escalating overseas, the country also faces the daunting challenge to the rebuild the U.S. workforce. Employers across nearly every industry and sector are competing to find workers with the skills necessary to fill open positions. The labor market remains tight with approximately two job openings per unemployed individual. This structural imbalance is partially due to our aging population, declining birthrates, rising mortality rates, rapid technological advancements in the workplace, a widening “skills gap,” the decline of legal immigration, and the steady multi-generation decline of labor force participating by working-age men. These workforce challenges are varied and complex, placing millions of workers at risk of losing out on the American dream.

We support “A Stronger Workforce for America Act” because it addresses the urgent need to grow our workforce and ensure a talent pipeline exists for the future. Specifically, the legislation would:

- ***Emphasize worker upskilling and reskilling to ensure competitiveness and advancement*** – A significant share of WIOA funding flowing to the states is dedicated to upskilling and reskilling the workforce. This legislation dedicates 50 percent of adult and dislocated worker funding to “individual training accounts” and on-the-job

training, while prioritizing employer-led upskilling opportunities. The legislation also provides eligible dislocated workers with individual training accounts worth \$5,000 to enroll in education programs that lead to high-skill, high-wage, or in demand careers.

- ***Develop career pathways by emphasizing second chance hiring and work-based learning for youth*** – The bill modernizes WIOA to ensure that the nation’s workforce development system works for all students and workers. This legislation builds on the success of the “Reentry Employment Opportunities” grant program at the Department of Labor to further support second chance hiring and improves youth activities by enhancing opportunities for summer and year-round employment.
- ***Promote innovation for a skills-based economy*** – The creation of the “Critical Industry Skills Fund” and focus on skills-based hiring are welcome additions to the law. By focusing on performance-based programs and skills rather than degrees, Congress will unleash the full potential of WIOA and ensure that workers and employers are prepared for labor market of 2024, and beyond.
- ***Ensure accountability and program integrity*** – By focusing the accountability system on skill gains, earnings, and real-time data, businesses and job seekers will have renewed confidence that WIOA programs will yield positive outcomes. The bill’s improvements to the “Eligible Training Provider List” will support participation and expand opportunities for learners in high-quality education and skills development programs.
- ***Modernize federal labor market reporting data to leverage AI and advanced technologies to support a skills-based approach to employment*** – This legislation makes important updates to the labor market data collection process, ensuring that data is as real-time as possible. Quality and accurate data will ensure jobseekers and employers are prepared to navigate the rapidly changing labor market, make investments in emerging fields, and acquire skills for the jobs of tomorrow.

Additionally, we urge you to prioritize and support H.R. 6585, the “Bipartisan Workforce Pell Act” which would expand federal Pell grant eligibility to include students enrolled in short-term, high-quality education programs. Specifically, the legislation would:

- ***Create new pathways to higher education*** – Many students today choose to enroll in short-term skills development programs rather than pursuing a traditional two or four year degree. By allowing students to use their federal Pell grant at qualifying workforce development programs that lead to stackable credentials at institutions of higher education, Congress can help create new pathways for students to pursue higher education.
- ***Prepare students for in demand jobs*** – For a program to be eligible under this legislation it must be aligned with a high-skill, high-wage, or in demand industry or occupation and lead to a credential that is portable to more than one employer. The

“Bipartisan Workforce Pell Act” ensures that students are prepared for a career and will get a return on their investment.

- ***Increase coordination between education providers and the workforce development system*** – This bill further aligns public workforce development systems with higher education by including State Workforce Boards in the program approval process. These boards play an important role in connecting employers and workers under WIOA and can help ensure that eligible programs prepare students for success in the job market.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to advance critical reforms to America’s workforce development system. We urge you to swiftly enact this important legislation.

Respectfully submitted,

National Association of State Chambers

Littler Workplace Policy Institute

Alaska Chamber

Arizona Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce/Associated Industries of Arkansas

Associated Industries of Massachusetts (AIM)

Association of Washington Business (AWB)

Business and Industry Association of New Hampshire (BIA)

Business Council of Alabama (BCA)

California Chamber of Commerce (CalChamber)

Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii

Colorado Chamber of Commerce

Connecticut Business & Industry Association (CBIA)

Delaware State Chamber of Commerce (DSCC)

Florida Chamber of Commerce

Georgia Chamber of Commerce

Greater North Dakota Chamber

Idaho Association of Commerce & Industry (IACI)

Illinois Chamber of Commerce

Indiana Chamber of Commerce

Iowa Association of Business & Industry (ABI)
Kansas Chamber of Commerce
Kentucky Chamber of Commerce
Louisiana Association of Business and Industry (LABI)
Maryland Chamber of Commerce
Michigan Chamber of Commerce
Minnesota Chamber of Commerce
Mississippi Economic Council (MEC)
Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Montana Chamber of Commerce/Montana Manufacturing Association
Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry
New Jersey Chamber of Commerce
New Mexico Chamber of Commerce
North Carolina Chamber
Ohio Chamber of Commerce
Oregon Business & Industry (OBI)
Pennsylvania Chamber of Business & Industry
South Carolina Chamber of Commerce
State Chamber of Oklahoma
Tennessee Chamber of Commerce & Industry
Texas Association of Business (TAB)
The Business Council of New York State, Inc.
Vermont Chamber of Commerce
Virginia Chamber of Commerce
West Virginia Chamber of Commerce
Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC)