

Carl D. Perkins Career & Technical Education Act Reauthorization

Career and technical education provides secondary students with engaging, relevant, and hands-on learning opportunities that lead to higher graduation rates and a range of post-secondary education and career options. CTE also prepares post-secondary students for careers and provides opportunities for degree and credential attainment.

A reauthorized Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act should create sustainable, high-quality technical programs and yield viable opportunities for students and communities. The federal government should serve as a partner to states to strengthen programs, encourage collaboration, and foster innovation. Updates to the law should be systemic, and resources should be targeted without compromising broad access to funds.

- ▶ **All students should have access to high quality CTE programs, particularly underserved students.** The federal government plays a critical role in ensuring that all students—especially those most in need—have access to an education that will prepare them to succeed in the 21st century. Strengthening post-secondary readiness through an effective blend of college and career skills offers students a competitive edge. Perkins provisions should reinforce these strategies in addition to ensuring access to CTE programs to underserved students. Support also should be available for initiatives that offer early exposure to programs of study.
- ▶ **Students need real career pathways.** Employers across the nation continue to stress the need for well-trained workers. The education and training supported by Perkins are vital to addressing the skills gap. Reauthorizing Perkins offers an opportunity to foster collaboration among educators and the business, labor, employment, and economic development sectors to produce meaningful programs of study and build cooperative data systems to track program success. Preparing students should also include an assurance of access to the most up-to-date equipment, student support services, and support for related certifications.
- ▶ **A comprehensive curriculum provides students with options and keeps them in school.** Research shows that when students are engaged in school, they are less likely to drop out. While industry has pressing needs for skilled workers, care should be taken not to narrow support for programs that also offer students careers as first responders and in related health care fields, as well as in emerging industries and smaller scale but still in-demand sectors.
- ▶ **Strong programs require a strong pipeline of quality, credentialed, and experienced educators.** Teachers of record should be fully prepared and certified regardless of the subject matter. In renewing Perkins language for teacher recruitment and retention, it is essential that CTE instructors receive appropriate training in pedagogical practices and mentoring by experienced teachers. Resources for professional development should also include training to improve instruction of students with disabilities and English-language learners.
- ▶ **CTE educator voices should be involved at all levels of decision-making.** Provisions should ensure that more CTE educators are involved in decision-making activities, including program and curriculum design; state and local planning and reporting; and on federal advisory panels.
- ▶ **State and local collective bargaining for school employees and faculty must be respected.** As educators' working conditions are students' learning conditions, everyone gains by addressing school and campus issues. Where teachers, education support professionals, and their employers are allowed to collaborate, improvements to student learning are the result.