January 26, 2017

The Honorable Glenn Thompson  The Honorable Jim Langevin
House CTE Caucus Co-Chair  House CTE Caucus Co-Chair
U.S. House of Representatives  U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515  Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tim Kaine  The Honorable Rob Portman
Senate CTE Caucus Co-Chair  Senate CTE Caucus Co-Chair
United States Senate  United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510  Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear House and Senate CTE Caucus Co-Chairs,

We, the undersigned businesses and organizations, write to express our desire to help more Americans enter the workforce with the skills they need to compete for high-skilled, in-demand jobs by supporting career and technical education (CTE) and strengthening the investment in the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins). In the 114th Congress, lawmakers in the U.S. House of Representatives overwhelmingly supported the passage of H.R. 5587, a bipartisan bill to reauthorize the Perkins Act. To realize the goals of this legislation, we must also provide the resources to ensure that all students have access to high-quality CTE programs that are academically rigorous and aligned to the needs of business and industry.

In the decade since the last Perkins reauthorization, our economy has experienced a tremendous transformation, increasingly requiring skills such as critical thinking and technical competencies. CTE is an effective tool for improving student outcomes and helps prepare both secondary and postsecondary students with the necessary academic, technical, and employability skills required to be successful in the workforce. Indeed, CTE prepares students both for college and careers.

High-quality CTE programs, supported by the Perkins Act, are critical to meeting the needs of this new 21st Century economy. As we consider how federal policy proposals can achieve President Trump’s promise to “make America great again” we urge Congress to support the Perkins Act and allocate adequate resources to ensure our country’s CTE programs can take full advantage of a newly reinvigorated CTE law.

Equally as urgent, employers of all sizes have been reporting a shortage of skilled workers for many in-demand careers. The Perkins Act is an essential and important step to addressing the nation’s persistent skills gap and ensuring students of all ages have an opportunity to participate in the American economy with a rewarding career. Perkins can support students, employers and the community by:
• Aligning CTE programs to the needs of the regional, state, and local labor market;
• Supporting effective and meaningful collaboration between secondary and postsecondary institutions and employers;
• Increasing student participation in experiential learning opportunities such as industry internships, apprenticeships and mentorships; and
• Promoting the use of industry-recognized credentials.

Our nation’s investment in CTE, provided through Perkins, is crucial to building our economy and maintaining a healthy labor market. Perkins-funded CTE programs, found in every state and Congressional district, are working with business and industry partners to help fill the jobs available today, while preparing a qualified workforce for the careers of tomorrow. From FY 2007 to 2016, total Perkins grant funding to states declined by 13 percent—nearly $170 million less in funding to support CTE.

As the new Administration and Congress consider investment priorities in the upcoming year, we hope that you will recommit to investing in our nation’s CTE programs, so that critical reforms can flourish throughout the country.

Sincerely,

AASA, The School Superintendents Association
ACCA - Air Conditioning Contractors of America
ACT, Inc.
Advance CTE
Afterschool Alliance
Alloy Engineering Co. Inc.
American Architectural Manufacturers Association
American Association of Community Colleges
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Hotel & Lodging Association
American Society of Employers
AMT - The Association For Manufacturing Technology
Arizona Technology Council
Associated General Contractors
Association of Career and Technical Education
Association of Community College Trustees
Association of Woodworking & Furnishings Suppliers (AWFS)
Augustus F. Hawkins Foundation
Automation Federation
Batelle Memorial Institute
The Boeing Company
Business Council of Alabama
Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
Committee For Children
Delta Systems Inc
The Business Council of Westchester
The New England Council
The Silicon Valley Association
The Society for Maintenance and Reliability Professionals (SMRP)
Thermcraft, Inc
Third Way
Toyota
Union Roofing Contractors Association
United Way Worldwide
Vermont Chamber of Commerce
Vernier Software & Technology
Whayne Supply Company & Walker Machinery Company
WV Council for Community and Technical College Education
Xerox Corporation
Young Invincibles