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June 26, 2018

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member

Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP)
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Committee Mark to Reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

Working with and through our state associations as the nation's leading advocate for public education, the National School Boards Association (NSBA) appreciates your work to reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE) Act. Your leadership to ensure greater success in college and career readiness through Perkins CTE will help our school districts, institutions of higher education, businesses and industry, and communities provide the well-rounded education and training opportunities our students need.

As your Committee considers its recommendations, we acknowledge the legislative provisions regarding equity to require disaggregated data reporting in an effort to close achievement gaps among subgroups of students, similar to the bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). As this legislative draft seeks greater alignment with ESSA and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), such provisions to promote equity will help leverage more collaborative partnerships with expanded opportunities for apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning among all students.

The provisions for measuring progress, however, raise several concerns about the practicalities of effective implementation, as they would not be conducive to the structure of many state and local CTE plans. For example, language in the Committee's legislative draft would "require the State to continually make meaningful progress toward improving the performance of all CTE concentrators [students who have completed at least two courses in a single career and technical education program or program of study], including subgroups as described in section 1111(h)(1)(C)(ii) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and special populations ..." With this requirement, considerations for changes in state and local resources for CTE programs, student enrollment, as well as those for local industry/workforce requirements, should be incorporated. Otherwise, any district with federal CTE funding that does not meet continuous improvement requirements for two consecutive years could be subjected to reductions in federal funding. Another reality that would impact this measure is the availability of data to inform programmatic changes, that usually occurs in December, rather than the end of a school year in June;

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thereby, making it difficult to improve performance within a program year given the timing of data collection, reporting and analysis.

Along with the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), NSBA appreciates the change proposed in the Committee's draft to ensure that funds can be used for CTE in the middle grades. This will help acclimate students in earlier grades to career paths and programs of study—all relevant to effective methods for college and career readiness. Another area of concern, however, is the authorization of appropriations. To ensure that all learners who wish to participate in CTE have access to high-quality programs of study, additional investments are needed. In Section Nine, the legislation would provide an initial authorization of \$1.23 billion for Fiscal Year 2019, with proposed increases of approximately \$88.5 million through Fiscal Year 2024. While this proposal would increase funding levels, greater investments are needed through robust appropriations to address the skills gap that many employers have cited and to sustain the workforce investments needed for economic competitiveness. As this legislation would maintain CTE as a formula grant program, expand career counseling for all CTE students and increase participation in programs of study for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), a significant investment is needed throughout the six-year reauthorization. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), CTE encompasses 94 percent of high school students and 8.4 million individuals seeking postsecondary certificates and associate degrees in CTE fields.

Since this reauthorization process began, NSBA has supported legislation that will provide the resources and measures necessary to our school districts for high-quality CTE programs, with a strong academic component and credentialing. Hence, a modernized CTE will have a lasting impact on the success of our local and national economies to address both current and future workforce investment priorities. NSBA's Center for Public Education has conducted pertinent research, titled [Career and Technical Education: Building New Pathways into the Labor Market](#), that includes data about career clusters, demographics of students enrolled in CTE, best practices and success stories. The research findings show that advanced courses with an occupational focus make a difference in student outcomes. While the vast majority of high school graduates do go on to college, some don't; which was the focus of the Center's "[Path Least Taken](#)" series. One of the major findings of that original analysis of Class of 2004 graduates was the outsized impact CTE coursework had on the future outcomes of the students who did not attend college. High school graduates who took a concentration of CTE coursework and high-level math and science classes and who earned at least average grades and a certificate or license in their occupational field achieved comparable, if not better, employment and social outcomes than the average college goer. The synopsis of this research series is that, obtaining "high credentials" – meaning a mix of academic knowledge and job specific, or technical skills, developed in high school plus a professional certificate or license – is a key to career readiness for our students.

Again, we appreciate your leadership and look forward to working with you and your colleagues regarding these and other priorities as the bipartisan process moves forward towards a final reauthorization.

Sincerely,



Thomas J. Gentzel
Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer

