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HEARING BRIEF

**HOUSE EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE FULL COMMITTEE MARKUP OF H.R. 2353, “STRENGTHENING CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY ACT”**

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Today the House Education and the Workforce Committee held a markup for the reauthorization of the *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act*. The new bill, titled H.R. 2353, *Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act*, is very similar to legislation passed unanimously by the committee and by a margin of 405-5 by the full House of Representatives last year. Members of the committee used the markup to discuss the bipartisan nature of CTE, its connection to workforce development and the need to move forward with an updated bill.

The bipartisan legislation does the following (you can find a fact sheet [here](#)):

- provides states more flexibility in the use of federal resources in response to changes in education and the economy;
- ensures that career and technical education prepares all students, including historically disadvantaged and vulnerable students, for success in high-skill, high-wage occupations and careers in nontraditional fields;
- improves alignment with in-demand jobs by supporting innovative learning opportunities, building better community partnerships, and encouraging stronger engagement with employers;
- enhances career and technical education through increased focus on employability skills, work-based learning opportunities, and meaningful credentialing, so students are prepared to enter the workforce poised for success;
- streamlines performance measures to ensure that career and technical education programs deliver results for students and taxpayers;
- reduces administrative burdens and simplify the process for states to apply for federal resources;
- rewards success and innovation in CTE program practices that have been proven to best serve students and employers;
- provides parents, students, and stakeholders a voice in setting performance goals and evaluating the effectiveness of state and local CTE programs;

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- and empowers state and local leaders to develop plans that improve the quality of career and technical education and take into account unique local and state needs.

## MEMBERS PRESENT

Full Committee Chairwoman Virginia Foxx (R-NC); Full Committee Ranking Member Bobby Scott (D-VA); Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL); Jared Polis (D-CO); Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR); Joe Courtney (D-CT); Frederica Wilson (D-FL); Alma Adams (D-NC); Donald Norcross (D-NJ); Joe Wilson (R-SC); Glenn Thompson (R-PA); Tim Walberg (R-MI); Bradley Byrne (R-AL); Glenn Grothman (R-WI); Rick Allen (R-GA); Jason Lewis (R-MN); Paul Mitchell (R-MI); Drew Ferguson (R-GA)

## OPENING STATEMENT

**Full Committee Chairwoman Foxx:** Chairwoman Foxx began the markup by noting the historic anniversary of the Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. She used the occasion to highlight that there is a need for access to opportunity for all Americans, not just those trying to get a four year degree. In her statement, she noted, “Career and technical education, or CTE, has helped countless men and women gain the knowledge, skills, and real-world experience they need to succeed in the workforce. These valuable programs — conceived and operated at the state and local level — can pave the way to fulfilling careers in a wide range of fields, including health care, manufacturing, computer science, engineering, and more.” You can find her prepared remarks [here](#).

**Full Committee Ranking Member Scott:** Mr. Scott also provided opening laudatory remarks about the bipartisan bill. In a prepared statement he said, “*The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act* is a bill that will ensure that quality CTE and work-based learning opportunities are accessible to all students, regardless of their background.” He made clear that he was pleased that the bill balanced the important role of the federal government with the addition of the substitute amendment that ensured the Secretary of Education would still need to affirmatively review state CTE plans. Mr. Scott also went on to recognize the contributions of several other members of the committee who worked on the bill before turning the markup back over to Dr. Foxx.

## MEMBER STATEMENTS

**Representative Thompson:** After Mr. Scott and Dr. Foxx completed their opening statements, Mr. Thompson gave an overview of the bill and his substitute amendment. He began by noting the need to roll back the Secretary’s authority (while the bill ensures a stronger review process by the Secretary than the 2016 version, there are other pieces of authority pertaining to the ability to withhold funds from states that were stripped) to ensure state and local leaders can focus more time on preparing students and less time dealing with what in his opinion would be federal overreach. Like Dr. Foxx, Mr. Thompson also emphasized that the bill increases transparency and accountability by empowering parents, students, and key stakeholders to set performance goals and evaluate the effectiveness of the program.“ To view his prepared statement, go [here](#).

**Representative Krishnamoorthi:** Mr. Krishnamoorthi followed Mr. Thompson’s remarks. As a co-author of this legislation, he too praised its merits and thanked a list of Republicans and Democrats who contributed to improving this legislation. He closed by saying, “Closing the skills gap is one of the most important things we can do to make sure our children remain in the middle class,” and went on to acknowledge that this bill is a strong step in that direction.

**Representative Wilson:** Mr. Wilson read a prepared statement about how this bill connects back to jobs in his district. He mentioned his appreciation for the South Carolina Boeing team and their work to provide job training programs across the state. He also gave credit to BMW and other employers contributing to workforce training and job development across the state.

**Representative Norcross:** Mr. Norcross used his speaking time to both praise the bill and to denounce the excessive adulation of four year degrees at the expense of technical careers. To highlight the successes possible with a technical education, he brought up his early career as an International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) fellow.

**Representative Grothman:** Mr. Grothman was somewhat woebegone about the proceedings. While he praised the technical and community college system and said that he was “glad that we are finally realizing we have too many people going to four year colleges,” he made clear he felt the exercise unnecessary and didn’t go far enough to keep the federal government out of state and local education. He remarked that state and local governments have the capability to figure “these things out on their own.” Mr. Grothman also added that the path to financial independence goes through finding a skill, rather than a four year degree, suggesting he doesn’t think the bill is necessary.

**Representative Polis:** During his speaking time, Mr. Polis highlighted his priorities in the bill which included expanded opportunities for P-Tech programs, access to open educational resources that can save students money, and dual/concurrent enrollment opportunities. Contradicting earlier statements by Republicans (also explained earlier), Mr. Polis emphasized the bill’s expanded role for the Secretary of Education which helped address the concerns of the civil rights community from the last Congress.

**Representative Mitchell:** Stated that he plans to work with his counterparts in the state of Michigan to better meet the needs of students. He noted this bill simplifies the application process for schools and local districts to access funds, increases opportunities for public input, and expands access for rural areas.

**Representative Bonamici:** Ms. Bonamici stated that the bill adds employability skills into CTE programs, so that students learn interpersonal and organizational skills. She also emphasized the rural programs and work based learning options championed by other members. Ms. Bonamici also mentioned that some of her priorities on equity were satisfied and detailed how the bill requires the Secretary to affirmatively approve state CTE plans within 120 days.

**Representative Ferguson:** Dr. Ferguson provided prepared remarks. He mentioned that during a recent trip throughout his district, the most pressing need among stakeholders was workforce

development. Noting the glaring needs in his district and the overall need to close the skills gaps, he urged his colleagues to vote yes on the substitute amendment and the bill.

**Representative Adams:** In her prepared remarks, Ms. Adams stated that because of this bill more students, particularly low income and minority students, will have the opportunity to explore careers normally out of their purview. She also noted the benefits that may be provided for these students because of the partnerships among institutions of higher learning, industry, and school districts supported by this bill.

**Representative Allen:** During his remarks, Mr. Allen made clear that his work in CTE started well before his time in the House of Representatives. He brought up how his home state of Georgia has been recognized as one of the best places in the country to do business and his ongoing belief that strong state CTE programs can have major contribution to workforce development.

**Representative Courtney:** Mr. Courtney talked about how building submarines in his district aligns with the need for highly skilled workers. He noted how these complex projects need workers who can meet the demands of employers and contractors. After walking the committee through a story about how a shipyard in his district has doubled the number of employees over the past decade, he returned to his main point that this bill should help improve supply of local skilled workers across the country.

## **MEMBER AMENDMENTS**

**Representative Thompson** offered an amendment in the nature of a substitute, which he addressed in his opening statement. The amendment also made changes from the bill as introduced to align the enactment date with the start date of the CTE grant year and to ensure programs funded under the National activities section were supported by evidence based research. The latter change was made at the urging of Representative Espailat, who was not present. The amendment was **adopted**.

**Representative Lewis** offered an amendment. During his remarks he noted this legislation aligns student learning with the demands of our modern economy. He noted it values work based learning and that it provides opportunities for career and technical education at juvenile justice facilities. He cited a statistic that 93% of of students who concentrate in CTE graduate above the national average. His amendment strengthens dual and concurrent enrollment programs in the bill by requiring that they be included in state plans and encourage states create articulation agreements so that credits are transferable. Mr. Polis, who championed the current dual enrollment provisions in the bill, responded positively to his amendment. The amendment was **adopted**.

**Representative Wilson (D-FL)** offered an amendment. Her amendment calls for non-violent ex-offenders to be included as a special population under the Perkins Act. She explained the difficulties for individuals with prior criminal histories to find employment and how discrimination against them disproportionately impacts young men of color. The amendment was **withdrawn**.

**Representative Bonamici (D-OR)** offered an amendment with Representative Polis. Under current law, if a state achieves less than 90% on any targets, they must implement an improvement plan. Current law gives the Department of Education authority to withhold funds if states do not make improvements. This legislation eliminates this tool and Ms. Bonamici argued that it is still necessary, although it has never been used. Mr. Scott chimed in to say he was not sure why we would remove a section that prescribes authority which is already inherent to any cabinet level secretary. The amendment was **withdrawn**.

## **CONCLUSION**

Mr. Thompson closed the meeting and asked for the bill to be reported favorably. The “ayes” had it and the bill was reported out of committee. Chairwoman Foxx then adjourned the hearing without further discussion.

For more information about the hearing, including written testimony and an archived webcast, please go [here](#).