

[SENATE WIOA REAUTHORIZATION TEMPLATE]

June XX, 2024

The Honorable John Cornyn  
U.S. Senator  
517 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ted Cruz  
U.S. Senate  
167 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cornyn and Senator Cruz:

I am writing about the reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). On April 9, 2024, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 6655, The Stronger Workforce for America Act (ASWA) to reauthorize the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The action now moves to the U.S. Senate and I understand the Senate HELP Committee is currently working on a WIOA reauthorization bill.

I want to share with you our community's significant disappointment that the House-passed bill (H.R. 6655) included several provisions that undermine local communities in their efforts to promote economic vitality. As you know, local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) are charged with implementing WIOA by identifying and addressing the needs of local employers. Several provisions in the House bill will significantly undermine the ability of local WDBs to serve business needs and match job seekers with employment opportunities.

For example, the House-passed bill includes a one-size fits all mandate directing 50% of Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker funds to be spent on "training" (regardless of what's available or needed in a community). "Training" is very narrowly defined and this mandate would redirect substantial funding, which has eroded significantly over the last several decades, away from where it is most needed.

The House bill would severely limit the funds available for business services to staff and operate local workforce development boards' (LWDBs) career offices, and for supportive services, such as intake counseling (finding training opportunities and jobs suitable for a person's education, experience and ability), and childcare or transportation, which hundreds of thousands of job seekers need to help them find or get trained for a job. For instance, in my area, our local workforce board estimates \_\_\_\_\_ [Insert impacts such as career office closures, staff reductions, employer service reductions, etc.][ The career office closings will make the system less accessible to job seekers, particularly those without good transportation, computers and broad band internet.]

While requiring that additional funds be spent for training might sound good in the abstract, people who need training to obtain self-supporting employment often need other support services **in order to successfully complete it**. As a result, we risk wasting a good portion of these additional dollars spent on training, as well as the current training funding, due to the inability of the trainees to successfully complete the training due to the lack of adequate counseling and support services. This is not good policy and serves neither the interests of businesses or our residents. It benefits (temporarily) only the training providers.

With funding for WIOA having eroded considerably over the last several decades, these challenges would be further exacerbated if the House proposal were to be enacted as currently structured. If we want more training, we should increase the funding available for training (and necessary supports) without requiring that LWDB's cease or curtail other valuable services.

The House bill also contains a provision that increases statewide set-asides of WIOA funding to 25% of all formula resources available under Title I of the law, which would further diminish funding available to address local community needs.

If these provisions are ultimately included in a WIOA reauthorization, our local LWBD will also have to curtail much of its important convening function (bringing together and attempting to align business, community based organizations, K-12 education, colleges and universities, private training providers and other stakeholders) due to such mandatory restrictions placed on fund usage.

Finally, H.R. 6655 would, as structured, allow for negative impacts to local workforce development areas which have been established, particularly rural ones, to identify and address these needs on a local level by allowing states to consolidate areas.

I urge the Senate to take a different approach and pass a WIOA reauthorization bill that omits these provisions above that will not enhance but instead will reduce and hamper the effectiveness of LWDBs and that will:

**Strengthen Local Capacity:** Funding for WIOA has eroded considerably over the last several decades and future legislation must substantially authorize additional funding to address the significant employment needs in communities across the country. In addition, future WIOA legislation should remove restrictions on skills development experiences contained in WIOA that allow local workforce development boards (LWDBs) and partners to provide training opportunities that fit their communities' needs.

**Promote Flexibility:** Broaden the underlying definition for what "counts" as training services to better enable successful participant completion (e.g. "training enabling" services such as aptitude and suitability counseling for training programs, transportation and childcare). Such efforts could also include other legislative approaches that more holistically account for the training opportunities LWDBs help to facilitate every day.

**Improve Operational Efficiencies:** Provide dedicated funding for one-stop center infrastructure costs, based on actual system needs, and eliminate onerous infrastructure funding agreement provisions in current law that disincentivize state and local collaboration. These efforts should include greater flexibility for the use of affiliated one- stop center sites and allowances for the virtualization of services provided under WIOA.

**Enhance Data Quality and Infrastructure:** Future WIOA legislation should codify and modernize the Workforce Data Quality Initiative, ensure robust access to individual-level employment data needed to report on program efficacy, and provide substantial new investments for the public workforce system to provide and make use of quality labor market information.

Thank you in advance for considering my recommendations. I welcome the opportunity to discuss these and other recommendations to improve WIOA at your convenience.

Sincerely,