



HILL VISIT TALKING POINTS

Keep It Local

ACTE hopes that most of your time is focused on demonstrating how CTE works back home. While ACTE can provide a snapshot of what CTE looks like nationally, you are the expert and can share exactly how CTE works in your community and state. When you meet with your Members of Congress, focus on these items:

- How does CTE meet the business community's needs, particularly considering the current economic environment? Discuss any effective industry partnerships you have within your program.
- How are you working with employers to provide work-based learning opportunities to students?
- How does CTE provide pathways for students into further education? Discuss secondary-postsecondary connections, programs of study, career pathways or initiatives at the postsecondary level like stackable credentials.
- Share any stand-out stories about innovative courses you have offered or inspiring student achievements.
- Paint a picture of how CTE works with specific populations in your community and share data and success stories. How does CTE work for nontraditional or underrepresented students, adults, opportunity youth and others in your program(s)?
- Invite your policymakers to tour your program and see firsthand how your CTE program is working to meet the needs of your students.
- How could you expand or strengthen your CTE programs with more resources? Share about gaps in current programs that could be addressed, waiting lists for enrollment or new programs that you would like to offer but aren't able to due to resource constraints.

Building our Investment in CTE

While funding for CTE has increased steadily since 2017, current funding levels are still insufficient for CTE to be able to provide its maximal benefit to students, workers, and the economy. Accounting for inflation, U.S. spending on education overall is still **nearly \$6 billion below the federal investment in education in 2011**. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2022, Perkins funding constituted just **1.8% of the total federal investment** in K-12 and postsecondary education. We are asking Congress to significantly increase Perkins funding in FY 2023, and to include investments for CTE and workforce development in any budget reconciliation package. Here are some helpful points related to Perkins funding to use during your meetings:

- Perkins funding serves almost 11 million secondary, postsecondary and adult CTE students nationwide.
- Perkins funding provides a strong return on investment, as students involved in CTE programs are more engaged, perform better academically and graduate at higher rates.
- CTE prepares students for careers in high-wage emerging fields such as drone piloting & manufacturing, cybersecurity and engineering.
- CTE is critical to preparing construction and infrastructure workers. According to the Brookings Institution, at least 15 million new workers will be needed over the next decade to rebuild the nation's infrastructure.
- Even with modest increases in recent years, Perkins funding is hundreds of millions of dollars below what it would be if it had kept pace with inflation over the past 20 years.
- Considering updates to Perkins in the 2018 reauthorization, and consequences related to the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress needs to continue to invest in CTE to ensure programs have the resources they need to successfully implement the new law.
- Congress recently passed the long-overdue Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 appropriations omnibus package. The omnibus bill includes a \$45 million increase for the Perkins Basic State Grant. While any increase is greatly needed and appreciated, this level of funding does not go nearly far enough to address community and employer needs that CTE can fill.

Using CTE to Promote U.S. Global Competitiveness

In February, Reps. Andy Levin (D-MI), Anthony Gonzalez (R-OH), Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL) and Bryan Steil (R-WI) successfully amended the House America COMPETES Act to include language that would both **(1) expand eligibility for Pell grants to shorter-term programs between 150-600 clock hours** and **(2) enhance data availability on postsecondary student-level outcomes**. These amendments were derived from the JOBS Act and the College Transparency Act, two top ACTE priorities. The Senate version of the bill, the United States Innovation and Competition Act of 2021, unfortunately did not include these provisions. As Congress moves toward a conference committee to negotiate the differences between these two bills and create a Bipartisan Innovation Act, we are advocating for short-term Pell and the College Transparency Act to be included in the final bill.

Pell Grants for Short Term Programs

- Like the JOBS Act, the amendment in America COMPETES includes carefully negotiated quality assurance provisions to ensure that Pell grants are being used on high-quality programs that are proven to be worth the investment.
- Short-term programs can quickly give students and workers certificates, licenses, and industry certifications in high-skill, high-wage, and high-demand fields like IT, welding, manufacturing, nursing, and industrial maintenance.
- Expanding the Pell grant program to cover short-term programs would help employers address longstanding labor and skills shortages by hiring candidates with required industry certifications
- Pell grants would increase short-term postsecondary program enrollment rates by 15 percentage points and completion rates by more than nine percentage points.

- Short-term programs offer “stackable” credentials to allow students to flexibly build upon their education over time.
- Two states piloted programs similar to what is being proposed in the JOBS Act/America COMPETES:
 - The **Virginia New Economy Workforce Credentials Grant** program had a completion rate of 92%. On average, graduates increased their take-home pay between 25% and 50%.
 - **Iowa’s Gap Tuition Assistance Program** completers experienced a 41% increase in quarterly wages. 24% of graduates pursued additional education in credit-bearing programs.
- The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimated that implementation of this policy would only increase the total cost of Pell by 0.5%.

Postsecondary Student Outcomes

- Like the College Transparency Act, the amendment in America COMPETES would create a national postsecondary data reporting system to provide information on student outcomes, such as enrollment, completion and earnings, across postsecondary institutions and career fields.
- Increased access to postsecondary data would aid in federal Perkins reporting and help educators ensure their programs are meeting student and employer needs.
- Without such data, parents and students are forced to make costly decisions about their postsecondary education with incomplete or inaccurate information.
- This database would help policymakers and institutions ensure that programs are serving student needs so that the country can improve postsecondary outcomes.
- The bipartisan College Transparency Act was carefully negotiated to include provisions that protect student data and respect privacy

Strengthen Connections between CTE and Workforce

The potential reauthorizations of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and the National Apprenticeship Act (NAA) provide Congress an opportunity to modernize the nation’s workforce systems to ensure that job seekers can access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. Any reauthorizations of these programs should:

- Strengthen connections between education and workforce development systems by integrating CTE leaders into WIOA governance and requiring that WIOA state plans align with Perkins V state plans
- Increase access to high-quality training
- Use relevant labor market information to ensure programs reflect local economic needs
- Provide adequate resources and support services for underserved populations
- Create a set-aside funding stream for infrastructure costs rather than using Perkins or WIOA formula funding
- Update the definition of “basic skills” to reflect the needs of the 21st century workforce
- Allow states to determine their own splits of funds for in-school and out-of-school youth
- Improve utility of data collection by modeling Perkins V’s comprehensive local needs assessment
- Expand and promote access to registered apprenticeships, including youth and pre-apprenticeships.

Recruiting and Retaining More High-Quality Educators

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the educator workforce struggled with widespread staffing shortages. The 2008 recession caused states to make large cuts to education budgets, causing layoffs and tough working conditions that the country's educator workforce has not recovered from even to this day. Further, economic conditions and low pay make it less than favorable for individuals with expertise in critical industries to consider taking their talents to the classroom. While educator shortages are well documented amongst academic teachers and some other education specialties, data is much less accurate and available within CTE. Further, many programs designed to recruit and retain teachers are not inclusive of CTE teachers and the unique ways in which they become certified. Here are ways in which you can engage Congress in a conversation about the CTE educator shortage:

- Currently, federal data on CTE teacher shortages is inconsistent and incomplete. The federal government can take steps to improve federal-level data collection on CTE teachers and on teacher shortages within specific CTE subjects at the secondary and postsecondary levels. We suggest strengthening the Department of Education's Teacher Shortage Area (TSA) data collection on CTE fields and authorizing a study of the myriad of challenges in data collection around the CTE teacher pipeline.
- Because many CTE teachers come directly from industry, there are many alternative pathways into teaching that are different from academic teachers. Federal programs, like those in Title II of the Higher Education Act, need to ensure they are inclusive of these pathways, and should prioritize CTE as a critical shortage area.
- Many CTE educators forego a higher salary in their industry because they have a passion for teaching, while others take on educational debt to become certified. The RAISE Act, which will be introduced by Sen. Booker in May, would give all K-12 teachers a much-deserved raise through a federal income tax reimbursement.