



HILL VISIT TALKING POINTS



Keep It Local

ACTE hopes that the majority 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 in light of the current economic environment? Discuss specific effective business partnerships you have within your program, and how you are continuing to work with employers and provide work-based learning opportunities to students in these difficult times.
- 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.
- How does CTE work for nontraditional or underrepresented students, adults, disconnected youth and others in your program(s)? Paint a picture of how CTE works with specific populations in your community and share data and success stories.
- What does today's CTE look like? Invite your policymakers to tour your program (once conditions are safe) and see firsthand how your CTE program is working to meet the needs of your students. *In addition, if you are meeting before Thursday, invite them to attend the NPS Virtual School Visit to get a first-hand look at CTE programs.*
- 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!

Funding for CTE programs has been declining long-term despite the growing need for career education and job training. While there have been small increases in recent years, Congress must make investing in CTE a top priority during the annual budget and appropriations process in order to meet student and employer needs. Here are some helpful points related to Perkins funding to use during your meetings:

- Perkins dollars serve almost 13 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.

- A skilled workforce delivers direct benefits to American employers through increased productivity and innovation in growing fields like health care, engineering and IT.
- Despite the importance of Perkins funding in advancing high-quality CTE programs, congressional appropriations have not kept pace with the growing need.
- 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 15 years.
- With updates to Perkins as a result of the 2018 reauthorization, and consequences related to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Congress needs to continue to invest in CTE in FY 2022 to ensure programs have the resources they need to successfully implement the new law.

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has been taxing and testing our nation's educational, digital and technology infrastructure. The CTE community, which is the talent pipeline for many of our nation's skilled workers, has not been immune to these challenges. CTE programs are facing many of the same dire needs as the entire education system, particularly those related to broadband and technology access, virtual curriculum and instruction, health and safety precautions, and teacher professional development. Here are some helpful asks and talking points related to COVID-19 to use during your meetings:

- **Support robust funding to stabilize state and local education budgets:**
 - CTE programs largely exist within the framework of the public education system, which has been taxed in unprecedented ways by the pandemic.
 - K-12 school districts and postsecondary institutions have faced significantly increased costs for both remote and socially-distant, in person instruction at the same time that state and local budgets have faced significant cuts.
 - That combination could prove disastrous for CTE programs in particular, which are often considered "electives" or are more expensive to operate effectively and safely.
- **Provide dedicated resources to CTE programs to aid in economic recovery:**
 - The Relaunching America's Workforce Act, introduced by education committee chairs Sen. Patty Murray and Rep. Bobby Scott, provides \$1 billion in dedicated funding for CTE programs.

Higher Education Act

The Higher Education Act (HEA) is the primary piece of education legislation that could be considered by Congress this year. Use your meetings to discuss HEA policies that would increase student access to high-quality postsecondary CTE, such as accessibility for short-term CTE job training programs for all students, and that would strengthen the pipeline of future CTE educators. You can view ACTE's detailed recommendations for HEA reauthorization in the background materials, but here are a few key priorities:

- All students, including nontraditional students, need the ability to choose postsecondary courses and financial aid programs that meet their individual needs and allow them to earn credentials quickly and efficiently.

- Evidence-based policymaking is key to ensuring program effectiveness, but data collected should be relevant and structured in a way to avoid burden to institutions.
- There is a nationwide shortage of CTE teachers and a rapidly declining availability of CTE teacher preparation programs that should be addressed in HEA.

Infrastructure

One often-discussed area of potential bipartisan cooperation this year is an infrastructure package. While the components of any potential infrastructure deal are unclear, it is important that CTE be included to ensure a skilled infrastructure workforce to support investments in infrastructure. Congress should keep in mind that:

- Infrastructure covers a wide range of areas, from roads and bridges to airports, waterways, energy and cyber.
- Addressing infrastructure deficiencies requires an investment in developing a skilled workforce that can design, build, upgrade and maintain various forms of infrastructure.
- Local CTE programs are best-equipped to prepare all types of students for various infrastructure-related careers.
- Any infrastructure proposal should also include dedicated resources for school construction and modernization:
 - The condition of school buildings, including CTE labs, provides a crucial foundation for classroom learning that affects students and the American economy, which is why their prioritization is critical.

Strengthen Connections between Education and Workforce Development Systems

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
- 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 vulnerable populations