



October 28, 2015

The Honorable Michael Enzi
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and
Pensions
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Bob Casey
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and
Pensions
U.S. Senate

Dear Senator Enzi and Senator Casey:

As the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee prepares legislation to reauthorize the Carl. D. Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE) Act, our Coalition welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on several critical policy matters. We are a broad alliance of more than 600 education, business, and professional organizations that is strongly committed to the goal of elevating the education of all students in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) as a national priority as reflected through education reforms, policies to drive innovation, and federal and state spending priorities.

In today's economy, strong STEM skills are a central element of a well-rounded education and every student needs to have a strong foundation in these subjects in order to land and succeed in virtually any job – from the shop floor to the research lab to the board room. Further, the best, most highly paying jobs are nearly all in the STEM fields. Additionally, in many areas of the country, particularly in rural and urban areas, a strong foundation in STEM training allows individuals to prepare for medium skilled, medium waged jobs with an eye toward earning more as those skills are built upon.

Our Coalition has joined with many others in calling for action to reauthorize the Perkins Act and we are pleased to see movement in the Senate to revise this important education law. As you proceed with rewriting the Perkins Act, we urge you to include address several important issues.

Alignment of CTE Resources with Labor Market Needs:

- We support comprehensive efforts to expand the capacity and diversity of the STEM workforce pipeline, including targeted initiatives to promote the inclusion of underrepresented minorities, women, and other high-need populations in STEM fields.
- We support public-private partnerships that promote the collaboration of "STEM-rich" institutions and professionals in educational activities and integration and alignment of educational and training programs at every level with workforce needs.
- We support including strong provisions in federal education laws that will promote a robust mechanism to solicit and include STEM stakeholder community input in decisions made by federal and state education agencies, such as the advisory boards established under the Perkins Act.

Educator Professional Development:

- We support robust and sustained federal investments in preparing and retaining new teachers, at both the elementary and secondary levels, to be skilled in STEM pedagogical content knowledge so that they can generate strong student learning and excite students about pursuing STEM careers.
- We also support robust and dedicated funding for effective in-depth professional development for STEM CTE educators, including informal educators.

Hands on and Informal Learning:

- We support strong emphasis on hands-on, inquiry-based learning activities, such as learning about the engineering design process, working directly with STEM professionals through internships, and participating in field experiences and STEM-related competitions.
- We support inclusion of informal education as a core strategy for enhancing and improving STEM education within CTE programs so that informal educators and programs are considered as valuable partners for STEM education improvement efforts.
- We support increased flexibility on the use of CTE-funded equipment and laboratory spaces for informal learning opportunities outside of regular school hours.

We recognize the need and challenge of translating these recommendations into concrete legislative proposals within the jurisdiction of the Perkin Act and pledge to work with you on the issues we have raised.

CTE programs are an effective tool for improving student outcomes and help prepare both secondary and postsecondary students with the necessary academic, technical, and employability skills required for successful entry into the workforce. CTE programs prepare students both for college *and* careers. If we are going to enable our students to compete in the global economy we must maintain a strong federal commitment to improve teaching and learning in the critical STEM fields.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James F. Brown III". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line extending from the end.

James F. Brown
Executive Director