

DRAFT

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CCSSO Perkins Reauthorization Recommendations

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998 provides opportunities to secondary and post-secondary students to develop necessary career skills for the modern workplace. According to the recent *National Assessment of Vocational Education Interim Report*, occupations requiring a vocational associates degree are expected to grow at more than twice the rate of overall employment growth over the next five years. Our nation's investment in career and technical education will directly impact our ability to develop a highly skilled workforce and compete in a global economy. In addition to teaching career skills, vocational education programs bring relevance to learning in America's classrooms for all students. To accommodate the increasing demand for career and technical skills from our high school graduates, Congress must continue to expand the vocational component of our K-12 education system. As Congress reauthorizes the Perkins Act, CCSSO makes the following recommendations:

- **Expand the current K-12 component of Vocational Education**— Students who benefit from a vocational program with a strong educational component outperform those students considered “college prep” on tests and in college. For many students, career and technical education in high school engages them in the curriculum in new ways and exposes them to opportunities in college or the workplace. Without access to career and technical programs in high school, students are denied an essential tool for learning.
- **USED is the appropriate agency to administer the Perkins Act**— Although the curriculum of vocational programs is centered around workplace activities, education is the primary function. The Department of Labor lacks the necessary relationship with state departments of education, school systems, and higher education institutions to adequately administer the Perkins Act.
- **Increase funding to keep pace with student population growth, increased demand for career and technical skills, and rising capital costs**— Funding for Perkins has remained stagnant for the last several years, as participation and costs for the program have risen. There is a growing need for auxiliary training programs to prepare students for the workplace, and those programs will not be possible without new investments from the federal level. Additionally, career and technical education is unique in its extensive need for equipment and technology. Legislation is needed to help states and school districts purchase and upgrade equipment and technology and obtain professional development for its effective use to teach students according to the most current industry methods.
- **Provide additional resources for states to create incentives for participation in state-led reform efforts**— In Maryland, the state agency has effectively used the limited state leadership funds for Project Lead the Way. In its first year, the

program offered \$40,000 incentive grants to seven high schools to establish state of the art engineering programs. The grants leveraged more than \$800,000 in local funding for the program and serve more than 420 students. Although the program has been very successful, the current funding provides grants for less than 4% of Maryland high schools. Every state would benefit from additional resources for state incentive programs and initiatives.

- **Career and technical education should be available for all students and integrated into the general curriculum**— Whether it be a class in career and technical skills or blended instruction in the general curriculum, vocational education enhances instruction and is an integral component of a seamless K-20 education system.
- **Increased flexibility for states to coordinate federal programs with state efforts**— States have taken the lead in developing successful career and technical programs. Any federal efforts at reform should build on the state models and allow for the continuation of existing programs. States must also be allowed to continue setting their own standards.
- **Academic expectations must be consistent with each state's standards for student achievement and program performance**-- Perkins must advocate for rigorous academics set in a career context via integration of academic and technical content standards.
- **Encourage greater collaboration among state agencies, particularly in the planning process**—All major federal and state education programs must coordinate and support each other to ensure a seamless transition for students. Perkins would benefit from greater communication and collaboration among agencies within each state that are involved in vocational education. Our nation's secondary and postsecondary institutions responsible for preparing a highly skilled workforce cannot succeed individually — they must be encouraged to support and inform each other.
- **Permit states to design standards around career clusters**— Career clusters allow states to develop standards individualized for each career field, offering a more focused experience for participating students. Where available and appropriate, states should also be allowed to use industry standards to evaluate workplace readiness and competence.
- **Federal core elements for reporting and data systems should include career and technical education components**— In order to increase our understanding of successful career and technical education programs, we need collect and track relevant data and encourage data-based decision making.
- **Strengthen the role of the vocational teacher, including teacher currency, professional development, and school system capacity**--- Career and Technical

education teachers would benefit from the same high levels of professional development encouraged in No Child Left Behind. However, the reauthorization needs to avoid defining a highly qualified vocational education teacher too narrowly; the diversity of backgrounds and expertise found with career and technical education professionals does not fit neatly into a definition based on degrees or certification.

- **Continue the effort started in the 1998 reauthorization to broaden the academic component of career and technical programs—** Career and technical programs open doors to both college and careers. A standards-driven high performing career-technical system is a workforce development and school improvement partner. Perkins must focus on both.