



Opportunity Nation
200 Clarendon Street
9th Floor
Boston, MA 02116

Tel: 1-587-400-0036
Fax: 1-877-890-0376

www.opportunitynation.org

April 7, 2014

Congressman Joe Kennedy
United States House of Representatives
1218 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Kennedy:

Opportunity Nation, a bipartisan, cross-sector national campaign driven by organizations and individuals committed to expanding economic mobility and closing the opportunity gap in America, supports your bipartisan bill, the Perkins Modernization Act of 2014, that will align State and locally developed career and technical education (CTE) programs with skills demanded by local and regional employers.

Opportunity Nation is a collaboration of more than 300 non-profits, businesses, educational institutions, faith-based and community organizations, and individuals who together support, engage and reach more than 100 million Americans across the country. Our diverse coalition is committed to the notion that a person's zip code should not determine his or her destiny. We believe that targeted actions to provide greater opportunity for young Americans will pay off in long-term economic success for families, communities and the Nation.

In order to improve opportunity for 5.8 million teens and young adults ages 16-24 who are currently out of school or out of work we have to change the way we do business. U.S. employers are struggling to find skilled workers even as 10 million young Americans are unable to get jobs. Forty years ago, just 28 percent of American jobs required an associate's degree or better. By 2020, 65 percent of jobs will require such credentials. Many young adults lack the skills and training required for good-paying, "middle-skill" jobs in fields such as information technology, health care, biotech, advanced manufacturing and business. Unless we dramatically increase the number of Americans who receive the required training and education, America will fall short by an estimated five million skilled workers within the next six years. High-quality CTE programs can help bridge the growing skills gap and maintain America as a leader in the global economy.

By focusing on "employment in in-demand industry sectors or occupations" the Perkins Modernization Act of 2014 would ensure that federal investments in CTE targets the skills demanded by employers in strong and growing industries. This bill would ensure that CTE programing accurately reflects the skills and credentials sought by employers in the labor markets where students plan to work.

We must continue to build strong ladders of opportunity for all young adults willing to climb them and we thank you for your leadership on this important issue. We look forward to continuing to work with you as this legislation moves forward.

Sincerely,

Mark Edwards
Executive Director