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REAUTHORIZATION OF THE CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION ACT

The global economy demands that more employees have a postsecondary degree or industry-recognized credential. Yet, the current silos of secondary and postsecondary education systems – and the funding streams that perpetuate their separation – are not preparing enough students to meet the demand for these middle- and high-skilled jobs. Career and technical education can provide students with opportunities for career awareness and preparation by providing them with the academic and technical skills needed to succeed in postsecondary education, training and employment.

Opportunity Nation recommends that the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Act be updated and reauthorized to help ensure there are better opportunities for college and career advancement:

1. REQUIRE INCREASED COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION BETWEEN SECONDARY AND POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS.

Drive better results

- Instead of having school districts and Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) separately receive subgrants, require states to make competitive subgrants only to district- higher education partnerships that will develop and implement articulated programs of study that begin in high school and terminate either with a high school diploma and an industry certification or with a postsecondary credential and an industry certification. Require that the programs of study provide students with the opportunity to receive postsecondary credit while in high school, such as through dual- or concurrent-enrollment programs.

Target to economic and geographic need

- Require that states target these subgrants based on areas of high need (using on-time high school graduation, percentage of youth 16-24 not working or in school, postsecondary completion, unemployment and poverty data). Because rural areas may face challenges in preparing competitive applications, require states to subgrant to rural areas a proportion of funds that is consistent with the percentage of residents living in poverty in rural areas. Opportunity Nation supports the enactment of the American Dream Accounts Act.



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2. REQUIRE INCREASED COLLABORATION BETWEEN CTE AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR; ALIGN CTE PROGRAMS WITH REGIONAL AND STATE WORKFORCE NEEDS; AND EXPOSE STUDENTS TO CAREER AND WORK-BASED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES.

Encourage partnerships to improve impact

- Authorize states to make subgrants to district-IHE partnership only if they have developed their proposed programs of study with the involvement of local employers who understand the broad workforce needs of the community, as well as with nonprofit organizations and can document that those programs of study reflect the needs of local employers, as demonstrated by local, state or regional labor-market data and confirmed by the employer partners.
- Require that each district-IHE partnership receiving a subgrant include one or more employer partners (which may be for-profit, private nonprofit or public), as well as one or more partners that are nonprofit community or intermediary organizations, and require that the subgrantees obtain (from the employer or nonprofit partners) a cash or in-kind contribution. Require that the employers participating in these partnerships understand the broad workforce needs of the community. Also require that the nonprofit partners understand these needs and have demonstrated expertise (as determined by the state) in providing or facilitating provision of the services and activities that will be carried out under the subgrant.

Improve quality through work-based learning

- To the extent feasible, require that each program of study supported with a subgrant provide students with work-based learning opportunities, and require that those programs of study are widely available to students.



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3. DEVELOP AN ENTERPRISING PATHWAYS INNOVATION FUND THAT WOULD: REWARD EVIDENCE-BASED PROMISING PRACTICES; FOCUS ON PROGRAMS THAT CAN BE SCALED AND REPLICATED; AND LEVERAGE MORE SUPPORT FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR FOR SUCH MODELS.

Scale Innovation

- Authorize the Secretary to award competitive grants for the development, validation and scaling up of innovative programs under the Enterprising Pathways Innovation Fund.

Encourage leadership from multiple community entities

- Specify that the entities eligible to receive grants under the fund are districts, institutions of higher education and nonprofit organizations, as well as consortia of those entities.
- Specify that the Secretary will give priority to funding applications submitted by district-IHE partnership (which may include nonprofit organizations) for activities to be carried out with employers, in particular, to projects in which employers will provide significant matching funds.

Support evidence-based initiatives

- Specify that the Secretary will award grants for development, validation and scaling up of CTE activities based on the level of evidence submitted by applicants.
- Specify that, in administering the fund, the Secretary may make “pay-for-performance” awards to private nonprofit or for-profit entities to undertake activities designed to achieve cost-effective outcomes in CTE and receive payment based on the extent to which they achieve those outcomes.



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4. ENSURE EFFECTIVENESS OF PROPOSED CTE ACTIVITIES BY STRENGTHENING PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT, ACCOUNTABILITY FOR RESULTS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS.

- Require the establishment of a common set of performance measures across states and programs. Measure the success of secondary-level programs based on academic achievement, attainment of career and technical skills, grade advancement, graduation, continuation into postsecondary education, and, as appropriate, labor-market outcomes. Measure the success of postsecondary programs based on retention, completion of a degree or credential, attainment of technical proficiencies and labor-market outcomes.
- Provide the Secretary with clear authority to establish common definitions for these measures and to collect the needed performance data.
- Ensure the Secretary has the ability to terminate competitive grants that are not succeeding; to take corrective action when states are not implementing formula grants effectively; and to provide recognition and rewards to states and other grantees that demonstrate the highest levels of success in meeting the needs of disconnected youth.
- Authorize the Secretary to give priority to funding programs and services that demonstrate evidence of effectiveness.
- Require that subgrants be made for three years, with an option for two additional years if the grantee or subgrantee is demonstrating results against established performance measures.



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