



August 26, 2024

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Chair
Committee on Health, Education, Labor,
and Pensions
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chair
House Education & the Workforce
Committee
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
Chair
Committee on Health, Education, Labor,
and Pensions
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Bobby Scott
Ranking Member
House Education & the Workforce
Committee
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Reauthorization

Dear Chair Sanders, Chair Foxx, Ranking Member Cassidy, and Ranking Member Scott:

On behalf of a group of national membership, policy, and advocacy organizations aligned on the need to strengthen the nation's data infrastructure, we write to express our strong support for several aspects of the Committee's recently circulated discussion draft to reauthorize WIOA. We believe the provisions identified here, many of which were also included in the House's recently passed WIOA reauthorization proposal (H.R. 6655), would dramatically improve the generation of and access to quality workforce data and call on Congress to prioritize them as part of the wider reauthorization process. Better workforce data empowers individuals to more easily identify the education and career pathways that will help them secure family-sustaining employment; supports employers in understanding the best sources of prospective talent to meet their needs; and helps policymakers develop and calibrate policies aimed at supporting our nation's most vulnerable populations and maximizing the impact of public investments.

Put simply, data is an essential ingredient to building and sustaining a strong and responsive public workforce system.

The reauthorization of WIOA offers an opportunity to improve upon several key aspects of the nation's publicly funded workforce system. A thoughtful reauthorization is crucial as our economy is undergoing significant changes that are fundamentally altering how and in what ways education and workforce development programs prepare learners and workers. The skills and credentials needed for the future are rapidly changing and new federal workforce development legislation can help learners, workers, and employers not only keep pace with these changes but thrive amidst them. At the same time, the need for more transparent, accurate, actionable, and secure information has never been greater as the needs

of other critical stakeholders like governors, workforce development boards, and policymakers tasked with implementing WIOA continue to evolve.

Quality data is critical to making this vision for the future a reality and ensuring that each of these stakeholders has the information they need to be successful. We were therefore pleased to note that this legislation contains the following critical elements:

- **Streamlining Data Access and Reporting:** Recognizes the important role statewide longitudinal data systems (SLDSs) play in ensuring quality, accessible data. We applaud the inclusion of SLDSs and their subsequent use throughout the draft. Leveraging existing state data infrastructure like SLDSs will not only help connect workforce development systems with other parts of the education continuum, but it will also allow for higher quality, timelier, and less burdensome data generation. Clarifying that SLDSs can be used to match records and access various sources of workforce data can also help to ensure that this information is used securely and in accordance with applicable federal and state privacy laws as envisioned by the legislation.
- **Codifying Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI):** Codifies the Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) and increases the program’s authorization level to support the generation of accurate and timely workforce data that can be used in longitudinal data systems and by other workforce stakeholders and entities. These changes would enable states to develop tools and resources that can strengthen program quality, expand state capacity to produce and evaluate evidence for decisionmaking, meet performance reporting requirements, protect privacy, and improve transparency. Given the significant new changes proposed in this legislation, we believe that additional funding—beyond what is currently envisioned in this proposal—will likely be needed in the future and applaud this first step towards modernizing and expanding the WDQI program.
- **Promoting Data Transparency and Interoperability:** Prioritizes and expands the adoption and use of linked, open, and interoperable data related to credentials, skills, and other pertinent workforce data to inform a wide variety of reporting and accountability processes to ensure that data generated within the workforce system is high-quality, transparent, and useable by a variety of actors. We were especially encouraged to note a new Act-wide requirement for data interoperability across all data collections and related reporting authorized in this legislation. We strongly believe that future WIOA legislation must generate high-quality, structured data in this manner, not only to further empower stakeholders in the public workforce system, but also as a key strategy to reduce existing reporting obligations as technological innovations continue to move forward.
- **Improving Wage Record Access:** Ensures workforce system access to the National Directory of New Hires (NDNH) for fiscal and management accountability purposes, including allowing the governor to designate an agency to facilitate data matching, validation, and security. These changes would greatly improve the timeliness and accuracy of subsequent reporting required under the legislation. In addition, the legislation makes significant improvements in other areas of current law to ensure that programs and initiatives make greater and more intentional use of other sources of wage record data for similar purposes.

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- **Leveraging Labor Market Information:** Promotes the use of labor market data and related information to ensure that workforce programs and initiatives are responsive to the actual and evolving needs of youth and young adults, learners, workers, and employers. We are especially supportive of the changes proposed for the public workforce and labor market information system which would expand the generation of real-time labor market information and ensure that this information is timely and user-friendly. These changes are crucial at this moment in time when the economy is undergoing a period of dramatic transition.
- **Encouraging Evidence-Based Interventions:** Introduces improvements to the publicly funded workforce system to increase the extent to which programs, services, and initiatives are supported and informed by data, research, and evidence as well as encourages continued learning—changes to current law that set the stage for improving the efficacy and impact of workforce development programs.

Thank you for your commitment and hard work in crafting a thoughtful, bipartisan approach to WIOA reauthorization. We are particularly appreciative of your robust focus on quality workforce data and its related infrastructure, use, and privacy. Should you have questions for us or would like to discuss these ideas further, please contact the Data Quality Campaign’s Vice President, Federal Policy Kate Tromble at kate@dataqualitycampaign.org.

Sincerely,

Advance CTE	National College Attainment Network
Alamance Achieves	National Indian Education Association
Aligned Impact Muscatine County	National Skills Coalition
All4Ed	National Youth Employment Coalition
America Forward	New America Higher Education Team
Building Our Future-Kenosha, WI	Oakland Promise
Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO)	Opportunity@Work
Commit Partnership - Texas	Per Scholas
Credential Engine	REDF
Data Foundation	Results for America
Data Quality Campaign	RiseUp
E3 Alliance	Rocky Mountain Partnership
Education Partnerships Coalition of Minnesota (EPC)	Seeding Success
Excelencia in Education	Social Finance
Foundation for Tacoma Students	StriveTogether
Higher Expectations for Racine County	Summit Education Initiative
Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)	The Boston Opportunity Agenda
Jobs for the Future	The Colorado Equitable Economic Mobility Initiative (CEEMI)
Knowledge Alliance	Toledo Tomorrow
Marin Promise Partnership	UnidosUS
Mission Economic Development Agency	United Way North Central New Mexico
National Association of Workforce Boards	Year Up

Cc: House Education and the Workforce Chair Virginia Foxx, Ranking Member Scott