

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 15, 2015

The Honorable Tom Perez  
Secretary, Department of Labor  
200 Constitution Ave. NW  
Washington DC 20210

Secretary Perez:

As Members of the New Democrat Coalition, we write to encourage you to carefully consider some of our priorities as you work to implement the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

As you know, WIOA passed with a strong bipartisan majority in the House, which reflects its importance as a building block of the ongoing economic recovery. Though we continue to gain jobs and the unemployment rate inches downward, many Americans are still out of work or lack the skills they need to find employment and begin a career. Earlier this year, we released our *American Prosperity Agenda* to address this problem by outlining how to help everyday Americans pursue – and achieve – the American Dream. As we rebuild after the economic recession, we must lay the foundation to ensure this dream remains in reach by bringing innovative approaches to strengthen the middle class and support those seeking to join it.

Congress passed WIOA to address just such a need. This important legislation will help bring our workforce into the 21<sup>st</sup> century by fostering the creation of new training models, supporting career development to students and workers, and better aligning federal initiatives with state and local needs. While we recognize implementing this legislation involves multiple federal agencies working across different economic sectors, we ask that you focus in particular on the following issues:

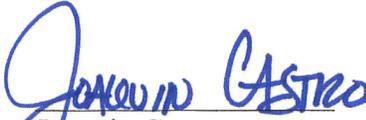
- **Ensure Workforce Development Meets Business Needs** – As workers receive training through schools, workplaces, and other means, we must ensure they do so with skills attuned to the local workforce needs. For small businesses, which often require a particular type of training or specific set of skills, ensuring training matches the needs of business is especially important. Businesses that rely on innovative or emerging technologies similarly need workers with modern skills and familiarity with new technology. Accordingly, conducting a study in coordination with other agency directors on how effectively workforce development aligns with business needs, as allowed under Sec. 169(b)(4)(C) of WIOA, will help ensure we support workers while making the most of our investments. Additionally, we encourage you to use multiple measures when crafting indicators that evaluate the effectiveness of WIOA programs serving employers.
- **Develop Robust Career Pathways** – Workforce development built on a strong foundation helps students enter – or re-enter – the workforce better prepared and advance them on a path to a successful career. However, too often employees lack networks of professional connections and a precise sense of how to advance in their field through opportunities such as apprenticeships. Accordingly, we were pleased to see WIOA

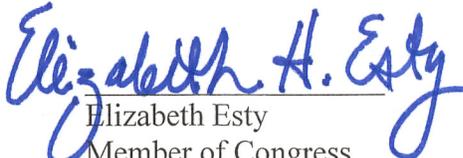
include strong provisions to improve matching apprenticeships with employers, as well as requirements for states that receive state leadership funds to take steps to align adult education with core programs including development of career pathways, as under Sec. 223 (a)(1)(A) and Sec. 223 (a)(2)(D, F, G, H). We also encourage you to take action within your discretion to expand the use of career pathways, especially for racial minorities and women, and support states and localities as they implement plans to improve career pathways available locally and regionally.

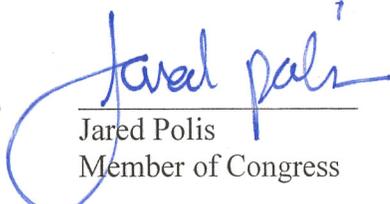
- **Improve Career Advancement for Low-Wage Care Providers** – With the Bureau of Labor Statistics predicting we will need 1.3 million new direct care workers by 2022, our country is on the verge of facing a major shortage in well-trained direct care workers, including a stable and well-trained child care workforce. However, home care aides and child care workers earn wages lower than many other professions with similar entry-level qualifications. Given the growing demand and current working conditions for these workers, we urge you to devote the necessary time and resources for carrying out the multistate study developing and implementing career advancement models for low-wage care providers, as required under Sec. 169(b)(4)(I). As demand for home care, child care, and direct care workers increases, this study will help evaluate how to make these jobs more competitive and attract well-trained workers.
- **Effectively Gather and Analyze Data to Evaluate Success** – In any agency, taking stock of which methods work and what programs get results is a vital part of success. As you move forward with implementing WIOA, consistent with your authority and resources, we encourage you to streamline efforts to collect and analyze data from initiatives created or expanded under WIOA to more effectively evaluate their successes and failures. We also encourage you to ensure that state- and locally-administered programs have the resources and capacity to do the same. To that end, we support the provision of direct assistance to states working to modernize their data systems to successfully implement WIOA and encourage you to facilitate a timely process for Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS) renegotiation to allow states to more easily exchange wage records across state lines and improve overall performance. Finally, to help states improve performance and evaluations, the Departments of Labor and Education should issue joint guidance on how to match administrative data from education, training, and wage systems while maintaining important privacy protections, such as those provided under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Unemployment Insurance confidentiality regulations.

Despite the recent gains in the economic recovery, there is more we can do to revitalize earnings growth and better equip our workforce to deal with the challenges of an aging population and rapid technological change. As you work to address these issues, we urge you to prioritize the above items in the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

Sincerely,

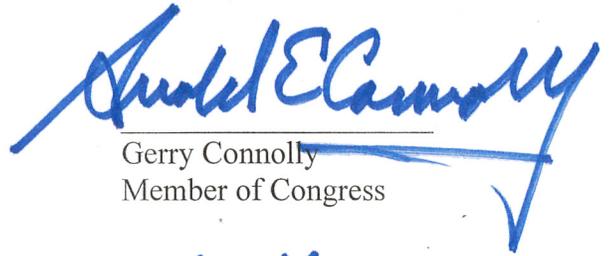
  
Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress

  
Elizabeth Esty  
Member of Congress

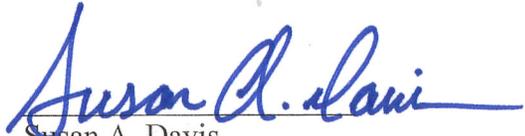
  
Jared Polis  
Member of Congress



Ron Kind  
Member of Congress



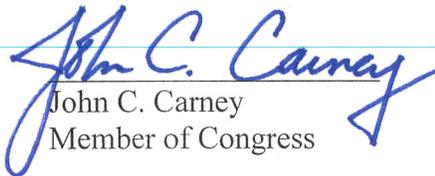
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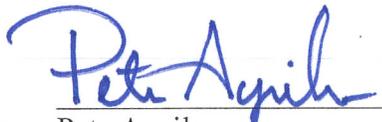
Jim Himes  
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John C. Carney  
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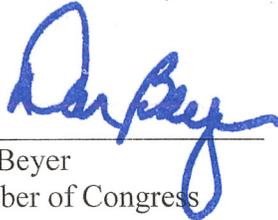
Derek Kilmer  
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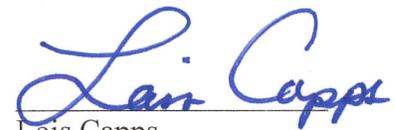
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Ami Bera  
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Don Beyer  
Member of Congress



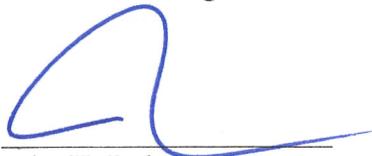
Lois Capps  
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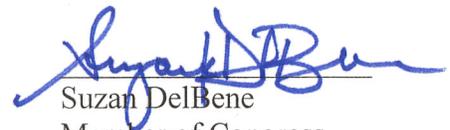
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Joe Courtney  
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John K. Delaney  
Member of Congress



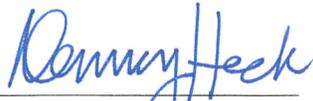
Suzan DelBene  
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Bill Foster  
Member of Congress



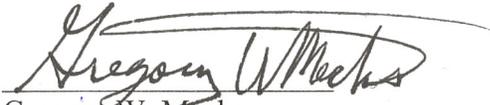
Gwen Graham  
Member of Congress



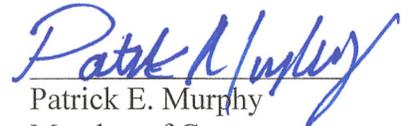
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Member of Congress



Ann McLane Kuster  
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Patrick E. Murphy  
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Scott H. Peters  
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Ed Perlmutter  
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Mike Quigley  
Member of Congress



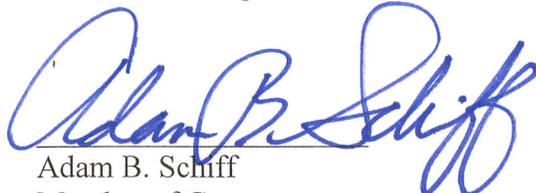
Kathleen M. Rice  
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Kurt Schrader  
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David Scott  
Member of Congress



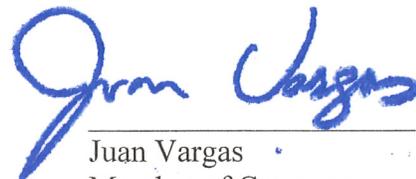
Adam B. Schiff  
Member of Congress



Terri Sewell  
Member of Congress



Kyrsten Sinema  
Member of Congress



Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Arne Duncan, Secretary of the Department of Education