

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1104

June 25, 2018

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Health,
Education, Labor & Pensions
455 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Health,
Education, Labor & Pensions
154 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Michael B. Enzi
U.S. Senate Committee on Health,
Education, Labor & Pensions
379 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert P. Casey, Jr.
U.S. Senate Committee on Health,
Education, Labor & Pensions
393 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Murray, and Senators Enzi and Casey:

Thank you for your continued bipartisan work to reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 ("Perkins CTE Act"). As you move forward with efforts to reauthorize this important legislation this week, I respectfully request that you consider how changes to the law will impact underrepresented students and prepare all students for the careers of the future.

Federal support for state CTE programs continues to play an important role in Hawaii, where roughly \$5.5 million in federal funding benefitted around 40,000 students last year. Thanks in part to federal support, local educators have integrated CTE into student learning to help fully develop students' career and academic potential by providing them with the 21st century skills that will prepare them for in-demand occupations in high-growth and changing industries. I have visited these students and witnessed how CTE programs are promoting student engagement through innovation in the classroom.

In addition to supporting improved curriculum for students, Hawaii's CTE programs are using federal resources to recruit and retain qualified teachers, provide teachers with professional development opportunities, increase employer engagement through teacher externships and student internships, and improving career counseling opportunities. Efforts like these support the curriculum and help to ensure that students are prepared for careers in industries such as business, construction and architecture, health and human services, hospitality, science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) occupations, transportation, and others.

However, in order to maximize our competitiveness, we must also ensure that everyone,

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regardless of gender, race, or circumstance, has an opportunity to contribute. Increasing the participation of women, minorities, and other traditionally underrepresented groups will not only improve the quality of our workforce, but will also ensure that we have enough graduates to meet the changing demands of that workforce well into the future.

Therefore, as you move forward with reauthorizing the Perkins CTE Act, I urge you to consider legislative proposals like the Equity in Career and Technical Education Act (ECTEA), which I have introduced to strengthen equity provisions for underrepresented groups in CTE programs, and other changes that would improve CTE programs and activities for students:

First, reauthorization should be used to help improve access to CTE programs for students from groups that have been traditionally underrepresented in CTE careers. Proposals like the Equity in Career and Technical Education Act (ECTEA) include provisions that would expand equity in enrollment and completion of CTE programs that would help to improve competitiveness and promote diversity in the field.

Second, reauthorization must preserve the existing set-aside for Native Hawaiian Programs, which provide targeted support for rigorous and culturally appropriate Native Hawaiian CTE programs.

Third, reauthorization should be used to help recruit and retain more qualified CTE teachers, and to support these teachers with professional development opportunities focused on serving special populations.

Fourth, reauthorization should be used to help recalibrate CTE programs so that they are more relevant to local labor force needs and students are better prepared for the CTE careers that will be available where they live.

Fifth, reauthorization could be used to help develop innovative new ways to assist state CTE programs by developing and sharing evidence-based best practices across states, schools, and community colleges. Hawaii, for example, is a leader in tourism and could share its best practices in the hospitality industry with other states. These efforts should supplement, but not replace, current programs and activities.

These changes represent a handful of improvements that the Perkins CTE Act authorization should address. I appreciate your consideration of these priorities, and thank you for your continued work to improve CTE programs and activities for students in Hawaii and nationwide.

Sincerely,



MAZIE K. HIRONO
United States Senator