



PERKINS REAUTHORIZATION SHOWS SOME TRACTION IN THE HOUSE
November 26, 2013

On November 19, the House Committee on Education and Workforce held a hearing, “Preparing Today’s Students for Tomorrow’s Jobs: Improving the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act,” which provided significant indication that the House might move on Perkins in the 113th Congress. [View the Archived Hearing](#)

In a pre-hearing [announcement](#), President Obama launched a new CTE competitive grant program called **Youth CareerConnect**, with the goal of creating more schools like the P-TECH schools in New York and Chicago that feature 6-year programs from which students graduate with both a high school diploma and an associate’s degree. Youth CareerConnect will hand out 25 to 40 [grants](#) in its first year, ranging from \$2 million to \$7 million, with a 25% matching funds requirement. [Learn More from Politico](#)

The Administration’s proposal of turning the \$1 billion Perkins Act program into a competitive grant program is unlikely to receive support from congressional Republicans. However, its launch may catalyze bipartisan support to reauthorize an improved and rebranded version of Perkins. In fact, although he expressed disappointment in “the Obama Administration’s announcement of a new national competitive grant program aimed at career education—without any input from Congress,” Committee Chairman John Klein (R-MN) indicated that “the Administration’s blueprint for reform of the Perkins Act offers a solid starting point for bipartisan negotiations, with an emphasis on industry coordination and state involvement in the development of CTE programs.”

Witnesses testifying before the Committee were the **Honorable Brenda Dann-Messier**, Assistant Secretary for Adult and Vocational Education for the U.S. Department of Education; **Dr. Bryan Albrecht**, President of Wisconsin-based Gateway Technical College; **Mr. Stanley S. Litow**, Vice President, Corporate Citizenship & Corporate Affairs and President, IBM International Foundation for the IBM Corporation; and **Dr. Blake Flanders**, Vice President of Workforce Development with the Kansas Board of Regents.

Stressing the need to meet economic and social demands by preparing millions of Americans to succeed in both college and careers through CTE programs, **Ranking member George Miller** (D-CA) remarked that “[CTE programs] are fostering educational environments that engage students with an integrated curriculum of core academic content and real-world, work-based relevance. But we must do more to spur innovation in delivery of CTE, to reward and replicate programs achieving positive outcomes for students and industry, and to ensure CTE is positioned to drive economic success through better workforce alignment and increased collaboration.”

Committee member and **CTE Caucus Co-Chair Glenn Thompson** (R-PA) was particularly supportive of moving Perkins forward. Because parents are the target audience for increasing student participation, there is a need to both increase parental involvement and re-brand CTE.

Congressman Rubén Hinojosa (D-TX) and **Congresswoman Susanne Bonamici** (D-OR) highlighted the issues of increasing and documenting equity and diversity in CTE programs. **Congressman Bobby Scott** (D-VA) echoed their comments; he expressed concerns to Assistant Secretary Dann-Messier about the closing of equity gaps in Perkins and the impact of competitive grants on programs such as Upward Bound, which was edged out of funding in his congressional district. In response to Scott's question about data on students participating in and completing CTE programs, Dann-Messier stated that she would provide Scott and the Committee members with a list of accountability measures. **Congressman Robert Andrews** (D-NJ) expressed an interest in gaining better access to identity-blind data that protects the privacy of students while allowing state and federal agencies to collect valuable information on program participation and completion by race, gender, and economic status. Hinojosa also tasked the panel with defining "high-quality" CTE and offering guidance on the establishment of assessment standards.

Of particular interest were **Congresswoman Susan Brooks'** (R-IN) comments about the need to combine college- and career-ready curriculums and to address the stigma associated with CTE as a lesser alternative to college prep. She is concerned that CTE is viewed as an alternative to a college-bound curriculum and supports the elimination of perceived "tracks" in school systems. She also believes that CTE should be incorporated in every middle school and high school curriculum. Her comments supported those of Congressman Thompson about branding strategies that will motivate parents to encourage their child's participation in a college- and career-ready curriculum. Also of interest were **Congressman Mark Pocan's** (D-WI) comments about expanding Perkins to incorporate apprenticeship programs within organized labor.

Overall, there appears to be a growing consensus on both sides of the aisle in the House Committee that Perkins reauthorization may be a real possibility in this Congress. Although additional hearings are currently not been scheduled in the House, a spokesperson for **Senator Tom Harkin** (D-IA), Chair of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, said that the senator "looks forward to an opportunity" to consider reauthorizing the act "during this Congress."