



Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education
“Preparing Today’s Students for Tomorrow’s Jobs: A Discussion on Career and Technical Education and Training Programs”

September 20, 2013 -- With the long awaited reauthorization of the Carl D. **Perkins** Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins Act) targeted for 2013, the House Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education held what it referred to as an exploratory hearing titled, “*Preparing Today’s Students for Tomorrow’s Jobs: A Discussion on Career and Technical Education and Training Programs.*”

Reauthorization of Perkins was expected through FY2012, ending in September 2012. Authorization was extended through FY2013 under the General Education Provisions Act, which currently serves as the primary source of federal funding for career and technical education (CTE).

Testifying before the subcommittee were **Mr. Alvin Bargas**, President of Pelican Chapter Associated Builders & Contractors, Inc. in Baton Rouge, LA; **Dr. Sheila Harrity**, Principal of Worcester Technical High School in Worcester, MA; **Mr. John Fischer**, Deputy Commissioner of Transformation & Innovation for the Vermont Agency of Education in Montpelier, VT, and President of the National Association of State Directors of Career and Technical Education consortium (NASDCTEc); and **Mr. Frank Britt**, Chief Executive Officer with Penn Foster, Inc., in Scranton, PA. Witnesses provided testimony on practical ways in which the federal government can lend support to state and local initiatives to improve CTE.

During his testimony, Fischer addressed the need for more accountability by both public and private stakeholders, remarking that the continued transformation of CTE programs promotes America’s ability to be more responsive to the needs of a globally competitive economy: “Federal investment in CTE is of major importance.” Fischer also said that it would take “a bold and progressive course of action” to break down the silos between academic and technical education, and between secondary and postsecondary education. Critical to such a plan, he cited five interconnected principles as proposed guidelines for federal policy priorities:

1. CTE is critical to ensuring that the United States leads in global competitiveness.
2. CTE actively partners with employers to design and provide high-quality, dynamic programs.
3. CTE prepares students to succeed in further education and careers.
4. CTE is delivered through comprehensive programs of study aligned to the National Career Clusters Framework.
5. CTE is a results-driven system that demonstrates a positive return on investment.

Fischer also addressed the need to re-brand CTE, saying, “It’s not my father’s voc-Ed. This is today’s CTE,” noting that future CTE models should provide a dual career and college-ready curriculum.

As one of the nation's largest and most experienced providers of online instruction in CTE at the high school and postsecondary level, Britt offered similar recommendations for the improvement and expansion of CTE programs during his testimony. "We have six recommendations to improve career and technical education in our country today:

1. Employ project-based learning to personalize the student experience.
2. Embrace digital learning.
3. Change the perception.
4. Stimulate innovation.
5. Promote data uniformity.
6. Reward competency, not accreditation.

Like many other organizations, we are seeking to navigate the new needs of the next generation of CTE students, and be productive advocates and supporters of current faculty and administration and collaborate with them to better address the needs of both traditional and adult learners," said Britt.

Seven years after the 2006 Reauthorization, Perkins is overdue for both funding and revisions to adjust to current CTE practices across the country. Even though there are guidelines within the Perkins Act that provide opportunity for strengthening some innovative CTE programs witnessed in several states, there is no incentive to implement those practices.

Offering a pragmatic view on the need for innovative expansion of CTE, Britt concluded, "Existing legislation is no longer sufficiently comprehensive to the changing dynamics of today's educational marketplace. Changing the perception of CTE careers, and embracing technology are just a few of the ways that we can positively alter the face of vocational training. We need to focus on training American for the nearly 50 percent of jobs in the 'middle skills' sector that will drive our economy in the years ahead."

Chairman Rokita stated, "In the coming weeks, this committee will discuss a range of proposals to improve the Perkins Act. I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to craft smart policies that will help put more Americans on the path to a prosperous future."

A second subcommittee hearing on the Perkins Act is expected in October.