

*Testimony of Congressman Glenn ‘GT’ Thompson  
The U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations  
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies*

Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro,

Good morning and thank you for your dedication to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies. In our current fiscal environment, I recognize the challenges placed before the Subcommittee and appreciate your ongoing efforts to provide quality education and health related services to millions of Americans.

As Co-Chair of the House Career and Technical Education (CTE) Caucus and senior member of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, I would like to use my time today to highlight the importance of dedicating strong resources to programs authorized by the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act, or the Perkins Act in Fiscal Year 2018.

Career and technical education provides students of all ages with the academic and technical skills necessary to become career and college-ready. According to the most recent data from the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, approximately 12 million students participated in secondary and postsecondary CTE programs during the 2013-2014 school years.

While quality CTE programs are available to a number of students, we must work to make them even more effective and accessible. Doing so will ensure that future and current members of our nation’s workforce have the opportunity to excel in high-wage, high-skill, and high-demand career fields—the very fields that keep our nation competitive in the global economy.

Employers across the United States, especially those in the skilled trades, are faced with difficulty as they search for qualified workers. According to a recent poll conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management, more than half of all employers reported they were unable to recruit workers for open positions, and human resource professionals predict that a lack of workforce readiness will impact employers for years to come. Today, more than 1 million positions remain open in the trade, transportation and utilities sector, and 315,000 manufacturing jobs go unoccupied. By training a competitive workforce to fulfill 21<sup>st</sup> Century demands, CTE programs can help employers fill these jobs and close the skills gap.

Last Congress, the House reached a bipartisan consensus on the importance of CTE when we voted to pass H.R. 5587, the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act, by 405-5. As a key sponsor of this legislation, which would have reauthorized the Perkins Act, I was encouraged by its passage and look forward to advocating for similar legislation in the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress.

In addition to taking steps to improve CTE-related policy, we must also support CTE through the appropriations process. Despite its importance, Perkins Act funding has declined by 13 percent or \$170 million over ten years. Today, more than 20 states are receiving a Perkins Basic State Grant allocation that is at or below the level they obtained in 1998.

Chairman and Ranking Member, this concerning trend does not reflect the needs of students, workers and employers—the backbone of the American economy. We must do better by them. With this in mind, I urge the Subcommittee to robustly fund Perkins Act programs for Fiscal Year 2018.

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Thank you again for your commitment to the issues within the jurisdiction of your Subcommittee and the Committee as a whole.