



Our Mission is to coordinate a regional workforce system that supports individual prosperity and business competitiveness.

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Caryn Lilley

Controller/HR Director,
KGW Media Group

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June 4, 2025

The Honorable Tim Walberg

Chairman, House Committee on Education and the Workforce

U.S. House of Representatives

2266 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert (“Bobby”) Scott

Ranking Member, House Committee on Education and the Workforce

U.S. House of Representatives

2328 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Walberg and Ranking Member Scott,

I am the owner of a real estate business in Portland, OR which is focused on providing workforce housing. Every day, I see the importance of job training in our field. Without programs to upskill people in our community there will be no way to give them the support they need to be successful.

As the Board Chair for Worksystems, the Portland Metro Workforce Development Board, I am writing in response to the President’s FY26 budget proposal as you examine the policies and priorities of the Department of Labor in your House Committee on Education and Workforce hearing on Thursday, June 5.

The President’s FY26 budget proposes consolidating 11 existing workforce development programs into a new 'Make America Skilled Again' (MASA) block grant. This proposal would significantly cut overall federal funding for workforce development at a time when U.S. cities require a highly skilled, trained workforce that can compete globally. To accomplish this, employers and workers are calling for more support to prepare them, not less.

Our Board’s primary goal is to build a workforce system that is flexible, responsive, customer-focused, and locally managed. However, block granting and cutting these funds to states would bypass and could potentially lead to dismantling the infrastructure — including local workforce boards — that provide direct services designed to meet workers at their point of need. To ensure the long-term economic success of this country, there is nothing more important than building successful programs to support individuals in our communities in developing skills for the jobs of the future.

Local workforce boards like Worksystems are critical to this long-term success. From July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024, Worksystems served more than 25,000 people in the City of Portland, Multnomah, and Washington

Counties in Oregon — 34% of those served were low-income and needed support to enter living-wage jobs. This success is possible due to a local, targeted approach that aligns workforce training with regional employer demand and ensures anyone can access programs that lead to sustained, family-supporting employment.

Achieving these goals requires federal support, effective policy, and continued investment in innovative, locally tailored workforce systems that can adapt to changing economic conditions and labor market demands.

Business leaders of every size and industry across this country are facing an unprecedented challenge finding skilled workers to fill their open jobs. Federal workforce and adult education programs help millions of Americans build the skills required for these emerging employment opportunities, and they put people to work. These programs are of paramount importance as we work to secure the nation's continued economic growth. A dramatic reduction in funding, coupled with the elimination of the workforce infrastructure that delivers services at the local level, would undermine the very outcomes we are trying to achieve.

Helping employers secure the highly skilled workforce they need, and putting Americans to work is not a partisan issue. We greatly appreciate your bi-partisan and bi-cameral cooperation to ensure that these critical programs and infrastructure receive the support they need to secure the nation's continued economic growth.

Sincerely,



James Paulson
Board Chair, Worksystems
Paulsonjames8@gmail.com

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cc:

The Honorable Suzanne Bonamici
Member, House Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
2231 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

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