



**National
Urban League**

*Empowering Communities.
Changing Lives.*

September 17, 2014

via electronic mail

Honorable Ed Whitfield
Chairman
House Energy & Power Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Bobby L. Rush
Ranking Member
House Energy & Power Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Bill Johnson
Member
House Energy & Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Whitfield, Ranking Member Rush, and Congressman Johnson:

As President and CEO, and on behalf of the National Urban League, we are pleased to lend our strong support for the **21st Century Energy Workforce Development Jobs Initiative Act of 2014 (H.R. 4526)**. This bipartisan bill takes a creative and pragmatic approach to increasing the number of skilled minorities and women trained to work in energy-related jobs of the present and future. Most important, the measure makes this effort a *national priority*.

The National Urban League brings 100-plus years of expertise in public policy and direct services delivery in urban communities across the country, particularly in the areas of education and workforce training, development and employment placement. Through our signature youth and adult employment and training programs we are placing strategic emphasis on insuring that our urban communities have access to the jobs that provide at least a living wage and good benefits, and access to the education and skills training that prepare them for jobs in emerging, 21st century industries – such as the energy-related jobs targeted in H.R. 4526.

Our work is challenged by persistently high black unemployment rates in an economy that is still recovering, where in 2013, the fourth year of the nation's recovery from the Great Recession, the rate of job creation remained low compared with previous economic recoveries. The gap between the need for jobs and their availability remains much too high. This is further compounded by a skills gap to meet the needs of those jobs that are available but require a specialized skilled workforce.

In the area of STEM education, which is essential for access to energy-related jobs, great disparities exist in the rate of minority participation in the STEM workforce with nearly 72 percent of such jobs held by Whites, while Black and Hispanic workers hold less than 6 percent of STEM-related jobs. The likelihood of entering a STEM-related career is significantly linked to successful completion of a STEM-related degree in college. Over half of all African American students that enter a four-year university have an interest in STEM but are not proficient in math. At the same time, while 21 percent of African Americans declare a STEM major upon entering college, less than 16 percent actually receive a bachelor's degree in a STEM field. Through our signature *Project Ready: STEM* program, the National Urban League and its affiliates are engaging children and youth in STEM learning, including children and youth who may not otherwise be selected to, or choose to, participate in STEM programs.

We therefore find that the **21st Century Energy Workforce Development Jobs Initiative Act of 2014** is effectively aligned with the education and workforce efforts of the National Urban League and its

affiliates by providing a pathway to employment for minorities and other historically underrepresented communities in the energy sector. Led by the Office of Economic Impact and Diversity, the bill calls for the Department of Energy to outline a comprehensive strategy for initiating collaboration between the DOE, Education, and Labor departments, as well as industry, schools, community colleges, universities, labor unions, workforce development organizations, and other stakeholders in order to engage, inform, train, and recruit minorities for the energy jobs of the present and future. In addition, the bill would:

- Encourage collaboration with representatives from within the energy industry (oil, gas, coal, nuclear, utility, pipeline, renewable, nuclear) to identify the areas of highest need in each sector and to develop guidelines for the skills necessary to develop a workforce trained to go into those sectors.
- Promote collaboration with schools, community colleges, universities, workforce training organizations, national laboratories, unions, and the energy industry in order to ensure that the nation's education system is equipping students with the skills, training, and technical expertise necessary to fill the employment opportunities vital to managing and operating America's energy industry.
- Promote and encourage STEM education as it relates to job opportunities in energy-related fields of study in schools, community colleges, and universities nationally.
- Provide information, guidance, and resources for schools, workforce development centers, and community colleges seeking to train or re-train candidates looking to go into the skilled, semi-skilled, and highly-skilled energy jobs in order to provide them with the skills and certifications necessary to fill these jobs.
- Encourage and foster collaboration, mentorships, and partnerships between organizations (unions, industry, schools, community colleges, workforce development organizations, universities) that currently provide effective job training programs in the energy field and institutions (schools, community colleges, workforce development programs, universities) that seek to establish these types of programs in order to share best practices and approaches that best suit local, state, and national needs.

The National Urban League applauds you for introducing this much needed bipartisan jobs bill and stands ready to work with you to advance it through Congress and ultimately to its swift enactment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "marc morial", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Marc H. Morial
President and CEO