

**Congress of the United States**  
**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Small Business**  
2361 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515-6515

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Members of the Committee on Small Business

**FROM:** Committee Majority Staff

**DATE:** February 20, 2026

**RE:** Full Committee Hearing Titled: “Career and Technical Education: Developing the Future of Main Street Success”

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On **Tuesday, February 24, 2026, at 10:00 AM ET**, the Committee on Small Business will hold a hearing titled “**Career and Technical Education: Developing the Future of Main Street Success.**” The meeting will convene in room 2360 of the Rayburn House Office Building. The purpose of this hearing is to highlight how career and technical education (CTE) programs prepare workers for the workforce and help alleviate labor shortages nationwide.

**I. Witnesses**

- **Dr. Keith Gunuskey**, Superintendent of Schools, Wallenpaupack Area School District
- **Mr. Mike Gibson**, Executive Vice President, Associated General Contractors of America, Kansas Chapter
- **Dr. Nikki Nix**, Chief Academic Officer, Godley Independent School District
- **Mr. Zach Boren**, Senior Vice President, Apprenticeships for America

**II. Background**

CTE programs prepare students with practical skills, industry knowledge, and hands-on experience for specific careers in fields such as health sciences, engineering, plumbing, and information technology (IT). These programs offer certifications, internships, and pathway programs that are linked to the business community, serving as a pipeline to stable, high-paying jobs. Compared to a traditional four-year college degree, CTE programs are more affordable and prepare students to step directly into high-demand, well-paying roles. While the average cost of attending a four-year university is nearly \$12,000 per year, some CTE programs cost as little as \$5,000 annually.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Trends in College Pricing: Highlights*, COLLEGE BOARD, <https://research.collegeboard.org/trends/college-pricing/highlights> (last visited Feb. 19, 2026); Grace Marsiglio, *Investment in Apprenticeships, Career and Technical Education Can Spur Entrepreneurship*, U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE (Jul. 26, 2023).

Students are seeking out CTE program opportunities more than ever, yet challenges remain. In rural communities, for example, CTE programs often face limited funding or reduced access to necessary resources.<sup>2</sup> Educators also report ongoing challenges, including insufficient funding for facilities and equipment, inadequate teaching space, and instructor shortages.<sup>3</sup>

Despite these challenges, CTE programs remain one of the most effective pathways to career success. An estimated 88 percent of families currently enrolled in CTE programs were satisfied with their overall educational experience.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, 84 percent of employers who recruit through CTE programs found it easier to hire qualified candidates.<sup>5</sup>

As we usher in the next age of the American workforce, a shortage of skilled trades workers could leave nearly 1.4 million jobs unfilled by 2030—costing the U.S. economy an estimated \$325.5 billion annually.<sup>6</sup> Investing in CTE yields significant returns not only for local communities but also for meeting our nationwide workforce demand. Public-private partnerships are key in advancing CTE programs and strengthening workforce development. Without these partnerships, CTE would remain an underutilized option for students entering the workforce, and the labor shortage would continue to increase.

### **III. Conclusion**

CTE programs play a vital role in strengthening the workforce by providing affordable, skill-based pathways to meaningful careers. These programs also bridge the workforce shortage gap that is currently affecting small business growth. Continued legislative support and public-private partnerships can expand access and improve outcomes. By investing in CTE programs, communities can better meet workforce demands, reduce labor shortages, and empower students with practical skills that lead to long-term success.

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<sup>2</sup> Carly Urban & Thomas Goldring, *Career and Technical Education in Rural Areas*, GEORGIA POLICY LABS (Jun. 26, 2025).

<sup>3</sup> Arianna Prothero, *CTE Is on the Rise. Here's What Educators Say Would Make Programs Stronger*, EDWEEK (Dec. 31, 2025).

<sup>4</sup> *CTE Works: Communicating Career Technical Education as a Path to Success for Families and Learners Fact Sheet*, CAREER TECH, [https://careertech.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/default/files/Communicating\\_CTE\\_Path\\_to\\_Success\\_for\\_Families\\_and\\_Learners\\_FactSheet\\_2021.pdf](https://careertech.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/default/files/Communicating_CTE_Path_to_Success_for_Families_and_Learners_FactSheet_2021.pdf) (last visited Feb. 11, 2026).

<sup>5</sup> *Career Technical Education Contributes to Job Growth and Meets Skill Needs Fact Sheet*, CAREER TECH, <https://careertech.org/document/career-technical-education-contributes-to-job-growth-and-meets-skill-needs/> (last visited Feb. 11, 2026).

<sup>6</sup> *Skilled Trades Shortage Could Cost U.S. \$325.6 Billion Annually in GDP by 2030*, DISTRIBUTION STRATEGY GROUP (Feb. 5, 2025), <https://distributionstrategy.com/skilled-trades-shortage-could-cost-u-s-325-6-billion-annually-in-gdp-by-2030/>.