



May 28, 2014

The Honorable John Kline
Chairman
Committee on Education & Workforce
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable George Miller
Ranking Member
Committee on Education & Workforce
2101 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Kline and Ranking Member Miller:

On behalf of Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC), a national construction industry trade association with 70 chapters representing nearly 21,000 chapter members, I am writing in support of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). This legislation will strengthen our nation's workforce development system and increase employment opportunities by creating a more streamlined approach that focuses on businesses' hiring and training needs.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the number of wage and salary jobs in the construction industry is expected to increase by 19 percent through 2018. ABC believes that effective, targeted and accessible workforce training programs will be crucial in preparing new workers for careers in construction, while also providing career development opportunities for current craft professionals.

WIOA is an important step in ensuring our workforce development system is capable of providing workers with the skills they need, and providing our nation with a workforce that can respond to economic demand. Specifically, the legislation will ensure that small businesses, which create more than 65 percent of all new jobs in America, have the opportunity to participate in shaping the development of training programs targeted toward available career opportunities. By serving their communities through local workforce investment boards, business leaders can become directly involved in shaping the development of job training programs and serve as an authority on training, skills and job opportunities in their communities.

Additionally, WIOA will eliminate existing statutory language that limited access to certain green job training grants to only those firms associated with a labor union. The existing language is grossly unfair to the 86 percent of employees in the construction industry who choose not to be affiliated with a labor organization and WIOA would end this discrimination.

Lastly, we appreciate that this legislation will allow existing programs that provide workers with industry recognized credentials, such as many construction craft training programs, to avail themselves of workforce investment funding. Craft training plays a vital role in many sectors of the construction industry in producing a skilled and safe workforce.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act is an important step in bringing much needed reform to our country's workforce training system. We appreciate your attention to this important matter, and urge immediate passage.

Sincerely,

Geoffrey Burr
Vice President, Government Affairs