



May 22, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Johnny Isakson
131 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Kline
2439 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable George Miller
2205 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
2350 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rubén Hinojosa
2262 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Harkin, Chairman Kline, Ranking Member Alexander, Ranking Member Miller,

On behalf of The U.S. Conference of Mayors, I want to thank you for your bi-partisan work to renew and improve the nation's workforce system, and commend the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee and the House of Representatives' Education & Workforce Committee for introducing a new reauthorization bill – the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA, HR 803).

As economic stewards of cities, mayors know that helping employers secure the highly-skilled workforce they need is not a partisan issue, and we greatly appreciate your bi-partisan and bi-cameral cooperation to move this critical legislation forward. Federal workforce and adult education programs help millions of Americans find jobs, prepare for work and build the skills required for emerging

employment opportunities, and they are of paramount importance as we work to secure the nation's economic future. Workforce legislation also helps employers, especially small employers, in securing the skilled workforce they need to fuel our economy.

We believe you have taken the most promising and beneficial approach to reauthorization by requiring a strategic, comprehensive and unified State plan to meet the requirements for each of the core programs; creating common performance measures across all programs serving adults and common performance measure across all programs serving youth; and eliminating the "sequence of services" that serve as roadblocks to training.

We particularly appreciate your protection of the strong local governance role, as well as maintenance of the business majority on streamlined local boards. These elements are critical to the implementation of local and regional workforce development strategies and essential to growing our economy. As you well know, strong private-sector led local workforce investment boards serve as catalysts and conveners, bringing employers, educators, workforce development and economic development entities together to coordinate efforts and develop a comprehensive employment strategy.

A successful workforce system is built on a foundation with clear roles and responsibilities for both states and localities, and mayors believe that business input into the service and training options made available to jobseekers is critical to success.

In addition, we applaud the bill's 100% transfer authority between adult and dislocated worker programs, which allows for more local flexibility to enrich the mix of workforce and adult education services, provides more flexible training options, and allows for transitional jobs strategies suited to disadvantaged jobseekers. We also appreciate the bill's stronger emphasis on regional planning and service, career pathways, consistent reporting, and the effective use of technology.

Finally, we greatly appreciate the bill's focus on youth who are out-of-school, out-of-work and at-risk. With more than 10 million Americans under the age of 25 out of work or underemployed, and African-American and Latino youth aged 16 to 19 experiencing alarming unemployment rates of 36 percent and 28 percent respectively, it is critical to establish a youth recovery and reengagement system to address the current youth employment crisis. H.R. 803, as amended by this bi-

partisan, bi-cameral deal, creates a strong blueprint to ensure that youth and young adults who are most in need have greater access to the training and education opportunities to address this significant threat to the country's future economic growth.

In closing, we again commend you for your work in producing a bi-partisan bill that responds to the needs of both workers and businesses. The U.S. Conference of Mayors stands ready to work with you to move this critical legislation forward to ensure that the nation's workers have the necessary skills, and that employers have access to the skilled workforce they need, to compete in the 21st-century economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Johnson', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Kevin Johnson
Mayor of Sacramento
President, The U.S. Conference of Mayors