



## **AESA Recommendations for the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act**

Thirteen million students are enrolled in career and technical education programs in nearly 13,000 public high schools. Today's increasingly global society requires American public schools to equip their students with a set of skills that is far more sophisticated and advanced than what was required in the manufacturing-based economy of fifty years ago. Specifically, the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy demands greater knowledge and more complex computational, communication, and technological skills of its workers. Congress, as well as the American public, must acknowledge a new role for how K-12 schools deliver career and technical education and training; a role that prepares students for lifelong learning in order to effectively respond to our nation's ever more challenging workforce development needs.

The re-authorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act provides Congress with a critical opportunity to reinforce the importance of effective, high quality CTE programs in schools that are aligned with college-and-career-readiness standards, as well as the needs of employers, industry and labor. AESA believes there are provisions in the current Perkins Act that must be sustained in any re-authorization, but we also believe changes must be made to the legislation in order to maintain a highly qualified and prepared workforce.

### **First, AESA believes it is critical to maintain the current Basic State Grant funding formula for the distribution of funds to states and local school districts.**

Formula grants provide a more reliable stream of funding to local school districts and are often the only way to ensure small, rural, or under-resourced districts receive federal funding for career and technical education expenditures. In addition, AESA believes the **Perkins funding streams allocated for K-12 institutions and higher-education institutions must remain separate.** Experience has shown that combining funding streams and requiring grant recipients to craft one unified application disproportionately allocates funding to higher education institutions instead of the local education agencies. The current fiscal environment requires a consistent stream of funding for all school districts with quality CTE programs and AESA is concerned by any proposal that would jeopardize current funding allocations. Moreover, the dramatic reduction in federal funding for Perkins over the last four years is yet another reason **AESA opposes any changes to Perkins that would mandate set-asides to be used for competitive grants.**

### **AESA supports efforts in the next re-authorization to incentivize local school districts to partner more closely with industry and the business community.**

However, we reject the creation of a "pay-to-play" system that would limit funding to a few prosperous industries within the state and prohibit federal funds from flowing to districts that lack a CTE program designed to advance the workforce of these particular industries. Instead, **AESA supports a requirement that every local education agency, or**

**consortia of districts that share career and technical education programs, form a higher education and economic development council**, which is a more thoughtful and productive way of ensuring that district CTE programs are aligned with the workforce needs of the state as well as specific industry standards. By encouraging districts to improve upon their use of existing workforce and industry councils, or to create these councils where they do not exist, school districts will ensure federal funds are spent on credible and relevant CTE programs.

**AESA also supports the creation of a new funding stream that would ensure districts can offer career-planning and counseling to all students.** Smooth transitions from secondary to postsecondary education and from school to work are essential for student success and necessitate informed career planning for every student. By giving students the tools and resources to actively participate in the career development process, trained school personnel can educate students on a host of post-secondary options, including CTE related careers, as well other pathways that may be unknown to them. For example, an employability course at the ninth-grade level would encourage all students to develop an awareness of their personal skills, interest, and abilities as they relate to career choices. Strong career-planning and counseling options ensure students are choosing the right courses for them and on-track to be college and career-ready by graduation regardless of whether they pursue a CTE related pathway. The dedication of federal funds to career counseling and planning would ensure that local CTE programs effectively reach traditionally under-enrolled students and assist them in understanding their options, creating a plan for coursework, laying out goals, and accessing the information they need to make knowledgeable decisions about their future career plans.

**The next Perkins re-authorization must also address the data collection burden** currently experienced by districts and refocus on amassing appropriate, existing information to determine the effectiveness of CTE programs and students. AESA understands the reluctance by members of Congress to direct Perkins funding to local school districts with unsuccessful CTE programs; however, we believe that the current measurements used to determine whether a program is succeeding in preparing students to succeed in the post-secondary environment are flawed and overly burdensome. **AESA recommends Congress assess the quality of a CTE program based on the following measures: academic skill attainment in reading/math, technical skill attainment, graduation rate, and secondary placement.** These data points are the most meaningful indicators of the success, or lack thereof, of any CTE program within a school district. These data points should be disaggregated by the subgroups defined in the current Perkins Act.

In conclusion, AESA believes every adolescent should graduate from high school prepared for college or fulfilling careers, but Congress must increase the federal investment in career and technical education programs as well make important changes to the Perkins Act if we hope to accomplish this goal. Our superintendents commit to doing everything in our power to ensure all young people can be college and career ready, but we also demand that the nation implement the labor market and economic reforms necessary to create the well-compensated jobs for which our career-ready students will be prepared.

