

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

The undersigned organizations applaud Congress' ongoing and bipartisan efforts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, including legislation that has shored up our unemployment insurance system, expanded access to food and other needed assistance programs, and otherwise helped to blunt the immediate impact of the crisis on America's families, workers, businesses, and economy. However, more investments will be needed to respond to the on-going fallout the crisis is expected to have on the U.S. economy and its workforce. **Specifically, we urge Congress to immediately invest at least \$15 billion in our nation's workforce development system to ensure that we can respond quickly to current demands for new workers in key industries, while helping those who have lost their jobs as a result of this crisis to transition to new family-supporting jobs.**

As we have seen over the past month, the heroes of the coronavirus pandemic are the workers at the frontlines – health care professionals working around the clock to keep us healthy; grocery store clerks working day and night to stock shelves; people in transportation and logistics to ship needed supplies; and electricians, mechanics, and HVAC and other technicians keeping our utilities running. These men and women in skilled positions – many of which don't require a four-year degree – have always been the backbone of our economy and this crisis has made that even more clear. But many of these industries were struggling to fill worker shortages even before the pandemic, and the increased demand for health care, manufacturing, and construction workers to help respond to COVID-19 will only exacerbate these gaps. Investing in high-quality workforce development is critical to ensuring not only that we have the workforce we need for today's challenges, but also to rebuild and sustain these vital sectors of our economy for the future.

Beyond the immediate workforce shortages, we must also be prepared to invest in skills to support our eventual economic recovery. As evidenced by the unprecedented 3.28 million workers who filed for unemployment benefits last week - a number that is expected to grow exponentially in the coming weeks - America's workers will need not just basic income support during this difficult time, but also assistance in finding new jobs, and for millions help in getting that first job at a time of high unemployment. Workers looking for jobs today, and employers looking for new workers, will rely on the expertise of our public workforce and postsecondary education systems to navigate the unemployment and reemployment system and to access the skills needed for new employment.

Our nation's workforce system – including workforce boards, labor unions, community colleges, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders – stands ready to assist in getting U.S workers and businesses the skills they need for today's challenges and tomorrow's economic resurgence. Unfortunately, current investments in the U.S. workforce system fall far short of the needs of workers, businesses, and communities. The U.S. invests 25 percent less in workforce programming today than we did before the great recession. During that downturn, the workforce system experienced a more than 200 percent increase in the number of Americans seeking reemployment and training services. At that

time, Congress responded with a 40 percent increase in funding for employment and training assistance through the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act – enabling the nation’s workforce system to serve more than 8 million people in 2009. Today’s crisis is even more acute and necessitates a more drastic investment to meet current and future need.

Again, we **urge Congress to invest at least \$15 billion in the nation’s workforce development system including programs serving youth and adults authorized under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), including Wagner-Peyser and Adult Education; and the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act as part of the next stimulus package.** Funding of this magnitude will be necessary to allow for services to help the millions of Americans who will need help navigating the new unemployment and reemployment process in this time of crisis and businesses working to reskill and upskill workers. It will help workers identify careers in in-demand industries and occupations, seek the education and training needed for these careers, and access supports like childcare and transportation that can help them succeed in training and in new jobs. It will ensure businesses are able to inform training provided in in-demand occupations and empower states and local areas to support access and analysis of labor market information necessary for rapid response to regional needs.

We thank you for your continued efforts to mitigate the harmful impacts of this pandemic on US workers and businesses, and we look forward to working with your offices to make sure our next legislative response includes necessary investments in our most important resource: our people.

Sincerely,

Advance CTE
American Association of Community Colleges
AnitaB.org
Association for Career and Technical Education
Association of Community College Trustees
Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs
Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE)
Augustus F. Hawkins Foundation
Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education
Coalition on Adult Basic Education
Corporation for a Skilled Workforce
Goodwill Industries International, Inc.
Heartland Alliance
IMPRINT
International Economic Development Council (IEDC)
Jobs for the Future
Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
MIRA Coalition
National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE)
National Association of Development Organizations
National Association of Regional Councils
National Association of State Directors of Adult Education (NASDAE)
National Association of Workforce Boards

National Coalition for Literacy
National Employment Law Project (NELP)
National League of Cities
National Job Corps Association
National Skills Coalition
National Taskforce on Tradeswomen's Issues
Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies
ProLiteracy
The Corps Network
The National Council for Workforce Education
United States Workforce Association
United Way Worldwide
Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians
World Education Services
YouthBuild USA

Cc: Representative Lowey, Representative Granger, Representative DeLauro, Representative Cole