

February 4, 2009

The Honorable Daniel Inouye
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Edward Kennedy
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Michael Enzi
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Arlen Specter
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Johnny Isakson
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Inouye, Cochran, Kennedy, Enzi, Harkin, Specter, Murray, and Isakson:

As organizations committed to a strong national workforce system, we are writing to express our great appreciation for the Senate's inclusion of over \$4 billion in funding for vital employment and training programs in S. 336, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Our nation's ability to emerge quickly from the current recession will rely in considerable measure on our ability to create and place America's workers in good jobs. Our diverse coalition of organizations is focused on producing skilled workers for the emerging job needs all across our economy, whether in infrastructure, green, energy, healthcare or other industries. **Workforce development is a critical component of our economic recovery and a central pillar of economic development that results in the creation of high paying jobs across the economy.**

The challenge before us is immense. Jobless claims are at their highest in twenty-six years: 11.1 million people are unemployed; Another 8 million work only part-time; and hundreds of thousands more are so discouraged that they have left the labor force and are no longer counted on the unemployment rolls. The unemployment rate for people over 65 is at the highest point in 30 years. And the outlook for youth employment is even more ominous, as only 32.7 percent of teens were able to obtain a summer job this past summer, the lowest level in over sixty years. Yet we have underinvested in our workforce development system since FY 2001 to the point that it does not have the resources to respond fully and effectively to this crisis.

It is essential that the Senate at a minimum maintain funding for workforce development programs at the levels included in S. 336 as reported, totaling over \$4 billion for employment and training activities including: \$1 billion for Dislocated Workers; \$500 million for Adults; \$1.2 billion for Youth Employment; \$160 million for Job Corps; \$100 million for YouthBuild; \$200 million for National Emergency Grants; \$250 million for High Growth and Emerging Sector programs; \$400 million for Reemployment Services; \$120 million for the Senior Community Service Employment Program; and \$500 million

for Vocational Rehabilitation. Without significant investment in reemployment services and in our human capital, preparing and placing workers (including those with low skill levels and barriers to employment) in good jobs in high demand occupations and sectors, there is a danger that the stimulus will address our cyclical economic challenges, but ignore one of the most pressing threats to U.S. competitiveness -- the skills of the American workforce that are so vital to our future economic success and competitiveness.

Thank you for your leadership in recognizing the need to assist America's workers through these investments in workforce development and transition assistance -- essential to creating new jobs, to helping workers quickly find sustainable employment, and to restoring our economic engine.

Sincerely,

American Association of Community Colleges (AACC)
American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs (AFOP)
Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL)
Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
The Corps Network
Easter Seals, Inc.
Experience Works
Goodwill Industries International
International Association of Jewish Vocational Services
Jobs for the Future
National Association of Counties (NACO)
National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA)
National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB)
National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP)
National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE)
National Workforce Association (NWA)
National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC)
United States Conference of Mayors (USCM)
USA Works!
Wider Opportunities for Women
Women Work! The National Network for Women's Employment
The Workforce Alliance
Workforce Learning Strategies
Workforce Strategy Center