Close the Skills Gap – Cosponsor the PARTNERS Act

Cosponsor the Promoting Apprenticeships through Regional Training Networks for Employers’ Required Skills (PARTNERS) Act

Dear Colleague:

We invite you to cosponsor the Promoting Apprenticeships through Regional Training Networks for Employers’ Required Skills (PARTNERS) Act to invest in industry partnerships that help workers and businesses access the skills they need to stay competitive in today’s economy.

Middle skill jobs—those requiring more than a high school diploma, but not a four-year degree—make up 53 percent of today’s labor market, but only 43 percent of U.S. workers are trained at this level. This creates a skills gap, leaving businesses struggling to find workers with appropriate skills, and workers without meaningful pathways to better paying jobs.

Industry partnerships help address the skills gap by bringing together employers, education organizations, training, labor, and community-based organizations to develop work-based learning programs. Apprenticeships and work-based learning programs provide individuals with paid, on-the-job training and classroom instruction. Employers align training with the skills they need, and workers learn while they earn. Unfortunately, small and medium sized businesses often lack the infrastructure and resources to establish apprenticeships or work-based learning programs on their own.

The PARTNERS Act would establish a grant program to support the creation and expansion of industry and sector partnerships to help small and medium sized businesses develop work-based learning programs and provide mentoring and support services for workers.

The bill authorizes the use of 50 percent of the funds deposited into the H-1B Nonimmigrant Petition Account for use by the Department of Labor for partnerships grants, resulting in no additional cost to taxpayers. President Bush and President Obama used the H-1B Account funds to further specific skills training initiatives. The bill upholds Congress’ oversight role by directing the Administration to spend money it already receives to yield better outcomes. The partnerships would use the grant funds to:

- Support small and medium sized businesses in efforts to recruit participants for paid work-based learning programs, with focus on SNAP and TANF recipients, connect with education providers to develop a curriculum for work-based learning programs, and navigate the apprenticeship registration process.
- Provide workers with adult basic education classes, access to tools, work attire, transportation, child care services, and other required items necessary to start employment.

If you would like additional information or to cosponsor the PARTNERS Act, please contact Maxine Sugarman in Rep. Bonamici’s office (Maxine.Sugarman@mail.house.gov) or Mary Christina Riley in Rep. Ferguson’s office (MaryChristina.Riley@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely,

Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

A. Drew Ferguson IV, D.M.D
Member of Congress