

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 17, 2016

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education  
& Related Agencies  
U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee  
136 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education  
& Related Agencies  
U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee  
156 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As you develop the Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 appropriations bill for the U.S. Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (Labor-HHS), we urge you to ensure that the final bill includes strong and robust investments in job training and adult education programs so that U.S. workers and businesses have access to the skills they need to grow the economy and maintain our nation's competitive edge.

States and localities are continuing their ongoing implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which Congress passed in 2014 and which outlines a vision for a more demand-driven workforce system that is responsive to the needs of employers and can effectively help workers access middle-skill jobs and credentials. Next year's appropriations bill represents a critical opportunity to build on Congress's vision for the law and invest in our nation's workforce. To achieve those ends, we must equip states and localities with the resources they need to implement WIOA.

We've laid the foundation this Congress. The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 offers much-needed relief from budget caps that have significantly undercut funding for critical training for America's workers. We must build on this momentum with solid, and sustained investments that bolster our skilled workforce. With meaningful investments, programs across the nation can take steps to ensure that workers can support themselves and their families and that employers have access to the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy.

In order to enhance the skill of the U.S. workforce, we urge you to:

- Fund WIOA Title I (job training) programs – including state formula grants under Title I-B (youth programs, adult programs and dislocated worker programs) and Title II (adult education) programs at their authorized levels.
- Fund WIOA Title III (Wagner-Peyser Employment Services) at \$680 million – as included in the Administration's FY 2017 budget request – to give states necessary, additional resources to provide WIOA's intensive reemployment services while implementing the new law.

- Fund the initiative included in the President's FY 2017 Budget Request renewing the \$90 million investment Congress made in 2016 for the Apprenticeship Grant program. Apprenticeships are a proven strategy by which workers can earn middle-skill credentials and increase earnings up to \$300,000 over the course of their career when compared to those who don't complete apprenticeships.
- Fund two new initiatives included in the President's FY 2017 Budget Request of \$5.5 billion for the Opening Doors for Youth Initiative to target job and skills training opportunities for youth and \$3 billion for America's Talent Compact, supporting competitive grants to increase collaborations between employers, CTE programs, workforce boards, community colleges and economic development organizations.

Thank you for your attention to these critical issues. We look forward to working with you to ensure that our investments in the U.S. workforce are sufficient to meet the needs of America's workers and businesses.

Sincerely,

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RICHARD BLUMENTHAL  
United States Senate

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KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND  
United States Senate