



March 20, 2020

Speaker Pelosi
U.S. Capitol Building, Room H-204
Washington, DC 20515

Senate Majority Leader McConnell
U.S. Capitol Building, Room S-230
Washington, DC 20510

Senate Minority Leader Schumer
U.S. Capitol Building, Room S-221
Washington, DC 20510

House Minority Leader McCarthy
U.S. Capitol Building, Room H-204
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

On behalf of the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), the nation's largest not-for-profit association committed to the advancement of education that prepares youth and adults for career success, and Advance CTE, the nation's longest-standing not-for-profit that represents State Directors and leaders responsible for secondary, postsecondary and adult Career Technical Education (CTE) across all 50 states and U.S. territories, we write to express the concerns of CTE educators and thank you for your leadership during this extraordinarily challenging time.

We are still in the midst of the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic and understanding its impact on our nation's K-12 schools, area technical centers and colleges. This pandemic is taxing and testing our nation's educational and technology infrastructure. We know from our members that the CTE community, which is the talent pipeline for many of our nation's skilled workers in fields such as information technology, health care, construction, etc., is not immune to these challenges. In particular, CTE often requires labs, practicums and hands-on learning that replicates real-world experiences as a means of students demonstrating technical competency. These experiences are being severely limited or being eliminated as schools and colleges appropriately follow CDC guidelines. The elimination of this vital part of CTE programs could impact student graduation and completion of CTE programs of study, as well as limit learners' ability to qualify for and attain industry-recognized credentials; these all have the potential of negatively impacting learner's ability to be prepared for critical, in-demand skilled careers.

As the K-12 school closures exponentially grow, we know state and local CTE leaders are working hard to craft creative solutions but that large-scale responses will need to be put in place in the future. Options may include expanding instruction into the summer, building more robust employer-vetted simulation capacity and rethinking how we can document and verify student mastery of technical competencies. Further, we anticipate postsecondary institutions having a dramatic increase in the demand for re-skilling and integrated adult basic education CTE programs to help those impacted by the emerging economic downturn. And in both the K-12 and postsecondary environments, ensuring equitable access and supports for those more vulnerable or historically underserved by CTE must be a priority.

It is too early for us to honestly assess the demands, and associated price tag, that our learners and our nation's employers will place on our CTE system. We know that there will be increased demand for CTE and that additional resources will be needed to support learners and the CTE infrastructure. We respectfully request that leaders in Congress consider investing robust, additional resources in CTE as emergency supplementals are crafted. CTE will play a vital part in our nation's recovery from this public health and economic crisis and therefore, resources are needed to ensure CTE has the instructors, equipment, and capacity to fully meet the emerging and projected demands.

In addition, we are hearing from many of our members about how this unprecedented situation is threatening their ability to comply with new requirements in Perkins V. Most states were close to finalizing their brand new state plans with the deadline approaching in mid-April, but now may need to make adjustments or may experience unforeseen difficulties related to final approval. The Department of Education is working with states on those issues. The biggest challenge that seems to be emerging is that many local recipients had not finished work on their new comprehensive local needs assessments and their local applications, as those pieces were not due until later in the spring in most states. Now that schools and businesses are closed, securing robust stakeholder engagement and thoughtful input on longer-term needs is quite the challenge. Local recipients have expressed the need for flexibility related to these requirements in a way that does not prohibit them from receiving their Perkins grant for next school year when resources to rebuild programs will be critical. States would like to be able to accommodate this flexibility, but need help in order to do that as there are no waivers built into the law in this area. There are also some concerns about the impact of long periods away from school and potential summer school extensions on the timing of funding expenditures, as well as other fiscal concerns, and the ability for the Department of Education to grant waivers to address fiscal issues, such as "redistribution" requirements, for a period of time would be helpful.

As we face potentially devastating long-term economic and health effects from the current coronavirus pandemic, it is imperative that Congress swiftly comes together with an overwhelming bipartisan majority to provide support to combat the current crisis. Any additional stimulus proposals should include dedicated resources for our nation's CTE professionals and students. Now more than ever, individuals need access to upskilling and reskilling opportunities to be part of the evolving workforce, and CTE programs will be adapting, as always, to the needs of business and industry in the current economic climate. We look forward to working with you as you continue to navigate these extremely challenging times in an effort to lead our nation to recovery.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the needs of CTE further, please contact ACTE's Government Relations Manager Michael Matthews (mmatthews@acteonline.org) or Advance CTE's Policy Associate Meredith Hills (mhills@careertech.org).

Sincerely,



LeAnn Wilson
Executive Director
ACTE



Kimberly A. Green
Executive Director
Advance CTE