

# knowledge alliance

April 9, 2021

Senator Patty Murray  
Chair, Senate Committee on Health,  
Education, Labor and Pensions  
154 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Richard Burr  
Ranking Member, Senate Committee  
on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions  
217 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

On behalf of Knowledge Alliance, a non-profit, non-partisan organization focused on improving education by advocating for the widespread, effective use of research-based knowledge in policy and practice, we are pleased that you will be working together to develop bipartisan solutions to update and expand workforce training programs, support and expand the National Apprenticeship Act, and encourage innovation. During the last reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), now the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Knowledge Alliance put forth a number of recommendations that focused on: promoting the use of evidence-based research; improving technical assistance and dissemination practices to drive more effective outcomes and; increasing the evaluation of workforce and adult education programs to determine what works. We were pleased that several of our recommendations for Title I, Workforce Development Activities, and Title II, Adult Education and Literacy were incorporated.

As you begin your work to support, update and expand workforce training programs and spur innovation, we urge you to consider the following:

- ***Improve data collection and reporting efforts across education and workforce programs to strengthen data linkages across the U.S. Department of Labor and U.S. Department of Education to improve program effectiveness.***  
Valid and reliable data is the foundation for research and leveraging evidence to improve federal programs. As research organizations, Knowledge Alliance supports federal efforts to improve our nation's data infrastructure that safeguards personally identifiable information, secures data and promotes ethical data use.
- ***Strengthen language on scientifically valid research and evidence-based to ensure continuity of use and application of evidence across all education and workforce laws.***  
WIOA requires states to support the development and dissemination of instructional and programmatic practices in adult education that are based on the most rigorous or scientifically valid research available. WIOA also requires that states in providing sub-grants to eligible entities consider whether the activities an applicant proposes to carry out are based on the most rigorous research available. Similarly, the Secretary of Education must carry out rigorous research on effective adult education and literacy

activities. We believe that access to high-quality and effective practices can be further strengthened in this regard through the inclusion of similar language on scientifically valid research in the authorizing language for youth, adult, and dislocated worker programs under Title I, and by including the definition of “scientifically valid research” that is in the Higher Education Act and the Head Start Act. Without such a definition, the bill’s references to scientifically valid research will have no precise meaning.

Furthermore, we urge the inclusion of “evidence-based” as defined in section 8101(44) in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to ensure workforce training and youth workforce investment activities are deployed that demonstrate improved outcomes. We would also welcome the opportunity to explore where additional references to “evidence-based” should be included to strengthen the effectiveness of WIOA programs.

- ***Continue to focus on technical assistance and dissemination on the practices that scientifically valid research indicates are most successful in improving the quality of workforce, training and adult education programs.***  
WIOA improved technical assistance (TA) and dissemination provisions in workforce development programs by requiring the Secretary of Labor to establish a system through which states may share information on promising and proven practices. Additionally, in Title II, states are required to provide technical assistance to local adult education and literacy providers, including through the development and dissemination of instructional and programmatic practices based on the most rigorous or scientifically valid research available and appropriate. It is critical that high-quality, evidence-based activities and practices continue to be shared through TA and dissemination networks.
- ***Increase the evaluation of programs carried out under WIOA to determine what works and improve their effectiveness.***  
Current law includes several strong provisions on evaluation for workforce and development and adult education programs, including authorized appropriations for research and evaluation in Title I, a 2 percent set aside for National Leadership Activities in Title II which includes evaluation and an independent evaluation of adult literacy programs and activities completed at least once every four years by the Secretary of Education. We urge consideration of more robust evaluation language within Title I to ensure that the Secretary of Labor reserves up to 1 percent of the combined appropriation for Youth Activities, Adult Employment and Training Activities, and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training Activities for independent evaluations.
- ***Consider leveraging existing demonstration and pilot project authority in WIOA to increase innovation within workforce and adult education and literacy programs through dedicated grants.***  
Building off demonstration and pilot project authority that exists throughout WIOA, we encourage you to provide for innovation grants that use a tiered-evidence approach that gives more funding to programs with higher levels of evidence and requires

rigorous and independent evaluations. Increasing opportunities for innovation within workforce and adult education and literacy programs will help build a stronger evidence base among these programs and expand successful practices at the state and local levels.

We look forward to engaging with you more deeply in these areas in a bipartisan manner to ensure that policies that promote the use of evidence-based practices and rigorous evaluation are included in workforce training, education and other related federal programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jacki Ball".

Jacki Ball  
President  
Knowledge Alliance