

December 11, 2023

Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chair
House Education & the Workforce
Committee
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Bobby Scott
Ranking Member
House Education & the Workforce
Committee
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: H.R. 6655, A Stronger Workforce for America Act

Dear Chair Foxx and Ranking Member Scott:

As a group of national membership, policy, and advocacy organizations aligned around the need to strengthen the workforce data ecosystem to ensure that workforce data is useful for individuals navigating education and career pathways and securing family-sustaining employment, we write in support of the workforce data provisions contained within H.R.6655, A Stronger Workforce for America Act (ASWA).

Major transformations are underway in the economy that are fundamentally changing how education and workforce development programs prepare learners and workers for the labor market. The skills workers need are also changing rapidly, and existing systems of education and career preparation are struggling to keep pace. New strategies to help more learners and workers deal with these trends and overcome related challenges can provide a number of benefits to both jobseekers and employers—less debt and lost time pursuing expensive but relatively low-quality training programs, a larger pool of individuals with the specific skills employers need, higher wages, and opportunities for lifelong skill development. But making education and skills development more effective and responsive to the needs of both learners and the employers can only be successful if it is sustained by a strong data ecosystem that gathers and publicizes data on labor market needs, earnings, program availability, and program quality, among other critical criteria, so that people can make informed decisions about their individual education and workforce journeys.

ASWA makes important strides toward improving this much-needed data ecosystem and meeting the evolving needs and expectations of states, workforce development boards, employers, and workers who each have substantial need for transparent, valuable, actionable, and secure information. We are therefore particularly pleased to see that the bill includes the following critical elements:

- **Codification of WDQI:** Codifies the Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) and increases the program’s authorization level to support the generation of accurate and timely workforce data that can be used in longitudinal data systems and by other workforce stakeholders and entities. In addition, these changes would enable states to develop tools and resources that can strengthen program quality, build state capacity to produce evidence for decision making, meet performance reporting requirements, protect privacy, and improve transparency.
- **Data Transparency:** Prioritizes and expands the adoption and use of linked, open, and interoperable data related to credentials, skills, and other pertinent workforce data to inform a

wide variety of reporting and accountability processes to ensure that data generated within the workforce system is high-quality, transparent, and useable by a variety of actors.

- **Improving Wage Record Access:** Ensures workforce system access to the National Directory of New Hires (NDNH) for fiscal and management accountability purposes, including allowing the governor to designate an agency to facilitate data matching, validation, and security. These changes would greatly improve the timeliness and accuracy of subsequent reporting required under the legislation. In addition, ASWA makes significant improvements in other areas of WIOA to ensure that programs and initiatives make greater and more intentional use of other sources of wage record data for similar purposes.
- **Leveraging Labor Market Information:** Throughout, ASWA promotes the use of real-time labor market data to ensure that workforce programs and initiatives are responsive to the actual and evolving needs of learners, workers, and employers. This is especially important at this moment in time when the economy is undergoing a period of dramatic transition.
- **Evidence-based Interventions:** The draft proposal introduces improvements to the publicly funded workforce system to increase the extent to which programs, services, and initiatives are supported and informed by data, research, and evidence as well as encourage continued learning—changes to current law that set the stage for improving the efficacy and impact of workforce development programs.

Thank you for your commitment and hard work in crafting a thoughtful, bipartisan approach to the reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. We are particularly appreciative of your robust focus on workforce data and related infrastructure, use, and privacy. Should you have questions for us or would like to discuss these ideas further, please contact Data Quality Campaign's Vice President, Federal Policy Kate Tromble at kate@dataqualitycampaign.org.

Sincerely,

All4Ed

America Forward, the nonpartisan policy initiative of New Profit

Credential Engine

Data Foundation

Data Quality Campaign

Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)

Jobs for the Future

Knowledge Alliance

National Center for Learning Disabilities

National Skills Coalition

Results for America

StriveTogether

UnidosUS

Year Up