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Better Jobs Through Evidence and Innovation Act

U.S. Senators Michael Bennet (D-Colo.) and Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-Del.)

The U.S. labor force is in the midst of a generational transformation driven by unprecedented technological advances. Federal workforce policy must meet the moment by testing and scaling innovative and cutting-edge practices to ensure that workers have the skills needed to compete in a 21st-century economy.

Unfortunately, the present workforce development system does not provide adequate funding for innovative solutions, including programs that evidence shows are most effective at giving workers skills to build sustainable careers.¹ Many of these successful programs are ready and able to serve workers and communities, but remain severely underfunded.² The current landscape also lacks the funding needed for the building, refining, and testing of new business models to meet the diverse needs of workers and employers across the country. Investing in agile, responsive, and effective workforce strategies is an urgent need as workers and employers face a rapidly changing labor market.

The Better Jobs through Evidence and Innovation Act will meet communities' employment needs by establishing the Workforce Development Innovation Fund at the U.S. Department of Labor to test and scale innovative strategies to improve employment outcomes for American workers. The Workforce Development Innovation Fund will:

- Provide for **three tiers of funding** to support the development and scale-up of evidence-based employment and training programs **that generate demonstrated, long-term economic improvements for jobseekers and employers**, as well as **high-quality evaluations** of their impact;
- Supports a **wide range of field-initiated programs and services**, including but not limited to sectoral employment programs, employment social enterprises, apprenticeships, re-entry initiatives, career pathways models, industry and sector partnerships, and on-the-job or incumbent worker training.
- **Make a wide array of entities eligible for funding**, such as State or local workforce boards, non-governmental organizations, labor organizations, tribal organizations, and institutions of higher education;
- Allow **the most proven programs to focus their resources on continuous improvement and scale-up** when additional evaluation is no longer necessary;
- Reserve up to 10 percent of funds for technical assistance **to enable a range of communities and providers to participate**—such as applicants from rural communities—including support to refine existing programs and conduct related planning activities.

¹ J-PAL (2022), "Sectoral Employment Programs as a Path to Quality Jobs," https://www.povertyactionlab.org/sites/default/files/publication/Evidence-Review_Sectoral-Employment_2222022_0.pdf.

² Holzer (2026), "Workforce Development in the United States: Recent Trends and Evidence," *Journal of Economic Literature* 64(2): 602-36, <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/jel.20251771&&from=f>.