

Educating Tomorrow's Workforce Act of 2017

Introduced by Senators Tim Kaine, Rob Portman, Tammy Baldwin, and Todd Young

Background: Today, the United States is 12th in the world in the percentage of 25-34 year olds achieving post-high school degrees. We need to make changes that help keep students engaged in their futures while also ensuring our educational programs are adequately preparing students for the jobs of the 21st century.

Career and technical education (CTE) programs are proven to help keep students more engaged in the classroom and less likely to drop out of high school, as well as help meet the needs of high-growth, skill-intensive industries looking for the next generation of workers. The U.S. Department of Education recently announced that the average U.S. high school graduation rate is 83 percent, while the graduation rate for students in CTE concentrations is higher than 90 percent. 81 percent of high school dropouts say real-world learning opportunities would have kept them in school.

The *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act* is a major source of federal support for the development of career and technical skills among secondary and postsecondary students. Last reauthorized in 2006, the Perkins CTE Act needs to be modernized to meet the demands of the 21st century workforce and ensure that students have access to the highest-quality CTE programs.

The *Educating Tomorrow's Workforce Act* would amend the *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act* to raise the quality of CTE programs by:

- *Defining what constitutes a rigorous CTE curriculum* and requiring Perkins grant recipients to incorporate key elements in their programs, including:
 - Credit-transfer agreement opportunities
 - Academic and technical skills assessments to measure student achievement based on industry standards
 - Use of training tools that align with the type of equipment and technology being used by today's industries
 - CTE-focused professional development for teachers, administrators, and counselors
 - Recruitment and retention plans to ensure highly effective educators and administrators are in place
 - CTE curriculum alignment with local, regional, and state workforce demands
- *Allowing states and localities to use Perkins grant funding to establish CTE-focused academies* like the Governor's Academies in Virginia established by then-Governor Kaine
- *Improving links between high school and postsecondary education* to help ease attainment of an industry recognized credential, license, apprenticeship, or postsecondary certificate to obtain a job in a high-demand career field
- *Promoting partnerships between local businesses, regional industries and other community stakeholders* to create pathways for students to internships, service learning experiences, or apprenticeships as they transition into the workforce or postsecondary education