



September 20, 2016

The Honorable Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and the Workforce
2101 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member Scott:

Spark, a national nonprofit youth mentoring organization, is writing to share its support for the Opening Doors for Youth Act of 2016 that will provide Opportunity Youth with summer and year-round employment opportunities and assist local community partnerships in improving high school graduation and youth employment rates.

Spark inspires 7th, 8th and 9th grade students to succeed in high school and beyond by connecting them with mentors in leading workplaces and supporting their academic journey with skill-building and resources. By engaging working professionals and connecting businesses with local communities, Spark empowers the next generation to perform better in school, graduate on time and lead fulfilling careers and lives.

Spark believes in reaching students during the critical middle grade years, keeping them engaged in school by introducing them to workplaces and positive adult mentors, and supporting their successful transition to high school. By paying more attention to this often overlooked educational and developmental period, Spark creates a positive path for students from underserved communities.

In many ways, the Opening Doors for Youth Act will do the same for underserved youth. Spark supports these efforts to assist local community partnerships in improving high school graduation and youth employment rates. Spark's unique mentoring program is not possible without its partners. Programs like Spark bring opportunities to connect businesses with local communities. Strong partnerships with schools and districts help Spark bring additional resources to educators and principals.

Thank you for recognizing the important role of these partnerships and organizations like Spark in helping today's youth succeed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason Cascarino". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jason Cascarino
Chief Executive Officer