

Representative Jared Polis
Opening Statement for ECESE Subcommittee Hearing
***“Providing More Students a Pathway to Success by Strengthening Career and
Technical Education”***
2175 Rayburn House Office Building
Tuesday, February 28, 2017 / 10:00 am

Good morning, and thank you, Chairman Rokita.

Today’s hearing will examine the critical role of career and technical education (CTE) programs in preparing our nation’s students, including those who are entering or coming from nontraditional pathways, for success in college and career. Many of these programs are funded under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006.

According to Georgetown University’s Center on Education and the Workforce, in the next five years, 65 percent of all jobs in the United States’ economy will require training beyond high school. In my home state of Colorado, career and technical education is receiving a renewed focus. Last year, Colorado created a pilot program where school districts receive \$1,000 for each student who completes a credential in a high-demand industry, finishes a workplace training program, or completes an AP Computer Science course.

This past fall, I visited the new P-TECH school in Longmont, Colorado that serves many students in my district. P-TECH, also known as Pathways in Technology Early College allows students to earn their high school diploma and an associate’s degree in a STEM field in six years. P-TECH is a partnership between the school district, Front Range Community College, and IBM, and gives students the opportunity to get on-the-job training while they’re getting their degrees.

In addition to P-TECH, Perkins CTE provides an excellent opportunity to lift up and support dual and concurrent enrollment. Dual enrollment is one of the most successful education programs in Colorado, and it’s breaking down barriers to accessing college for many low-income and first generation students. Students in

Colorado that participate in dual and concurrent enrollment are less likely to need remedial courses in college, and they are 23 percent more likely to continue into postsecondary education after high school. It's also an effective cost-saving strategy for students. Last year, I visited Colorado Early College High School in Fort Collins, or CEC. For students at CEC, they graduate high school with an associate's degree, sometimes in four years, and sometimes in five or six. Those graduates are not only able to get college experience, but they've effectively cut their cost for a four-year degree in half.

CTE is also critical for filling high-needs jobs. Just last fall, I met with representatives from the Northern Colorado Labor Council. They shared how there are openings for apprenticeships in Northern Colorado, which pay a fair wage and can lead to a job, but they don't have anyone to fill the openings. This gets to the heart of why we need strong career readiness programs. In many places there are good-paying jobs available. The federal government has a role to play in helping ensure students are trained to fill them.

Unfortunately, after harmful sequestration cuts, public funding for CTE is at historic lows. It is clear that we should not continue to cut funding for critical programs, like CTE, that engage students with an integrated curriculum of core academic content and real-world, work-based relevance.

Instead, we must support high-quality CTE programs. For many years, the Perkins Act has supported the development of CTE programs that cultivate in-demand skills among secondary and postsecondary students.

Reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act presents this Committee with an opportunity to ensure that CTE programs are of high quality, emphasize equity, align with academic and labor market demands, and provide opportunities for all students – especially those historically underserved – to receive credentials that lead to high-skill, high-wage, in-demand career opportunities. We also need to ensure that any reauthorization is bipartisan, and comes with strong accountability and quality indicators that ensure not only that a diverse population of students are being served, but also that every student is being served well. We can achieve these goals through increased collaboration and

flexibility at the state and local level, while maintaining secretarial authority to regulate and enforce the legislation at the federal level.

I look forward to hearing from our distinguished panel of witnesses and discussing how we can equip our nation's students with the skills they need to succeed in a rapidly evolving 21st century economy.

Thank you, and I yield back my time.