



The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act

The Strengthening Career and Technical Education (CTE) for the 21st Century Act ensures all students can benefit from high-quality CTE programs that prepare them for high-skill, high-wage employment.

The *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act* provides federal support to state and local secondary and postsecondary education CTE programs that provide students the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to succeed in the today's competitive marketplace. Long overdue for reauthorization, this federal law must be updated to improve CTE program quality and relevance to meet the realities and challenges facing today's students and tomorrow's economic needs.

Building on recent federal legislation to reform public K-12 education systems and state and local workforce development systems, House Democrats worked across the aisle to craft the bipartisan *Strengthening CTE for the 21st Century Act*, which will improve current law by:

Increasing alignment between CTE and careers.

- Requires state and local programs to offer all students the opportunity to participate in work-based learning as part of a high-quality CTE program of study that gives students real world skills and fosters in-depth, first-hand engagement with the tasks required in a given career field.
- Supports the integration of employability skills into CTE programs and programs of study to ensure all students learn the general skills that are necessary for success in the labor market for all employment levels and in all sectors, including the integration of academic knowledge and technical skills applied to the workplace, interpersonal, analytical and organizational skills, and personal qualities that enable individuals to interact effectively with others.

Ensuring opportunity for participation in CTE for underserved students.

- Re-engages disconnected youth with the education system through CTE, so that they are able to achieve positive academic and career outcomes, by updating the definition for "special populations" to include homeless individuals and youth with a parent who is a member of the Armed Forces on active duty.
- Supports the integration of new technologies and universal design for learning to increase access for students who are disconnected due to geography, socioeconomic status, disability, or language barriers.
- Increases focus on serving CTE students in juvenile justice and correctional institutions by increasing the amount of funds that States can reserve to serve these populations.
- Requires funds to be used to meet the needs of special populations and students pursuing careers in nontraditional fields to prioritize equity of opportunity for all students, especially those in historically underserved and vulnerable student populations.

Improving collaboration between secondary and postsecondary educational institutions, industry, employers, and community partners.

- Requires stakeholder input when conducting the comprehensive needs assessment within the local application to actively involve educators, parents, and community members in student learning and development of academic and 21st century workforce skills.
- Provides practitioners and communities the opportunity to actively engage in evaluating program quality by setting program performance levels, subject to approval of the Secretary of Education.

Promoting implementation of innovative CTE programs.

- Increases the amount of funding available for state leadership activities to be used to support innovative strategies and activities, or the replication and expansion of evidence-based activities to improve CTE.
- Authorizes the US Secretary of Education to award grants to replicate and scale innovative CTE programs that serve the needs of students, employers, and communities.

Improving outcomes for students, employers, and communities.

- Defines program of study to incorporate challenging State academic standards, work-based learning, and meaningful credentialing, to ensure all students can benefit from high-quality CTE programs.
- Holds state and local programs accountable for student outcomes aligned to academic and workforce needs.
- Maintains a statutory focus on preparing students for success in nontraditional fields, such as fields focused on science (including computer science), technology, engineering, and mathematics.
- Directs the Government Accountability Office to conduct a study to evaluate the strategies, components, policies, and practices used to successfully assist historically underserved student populations in pursuing and completing programs of study aligned to high-skill, high-wage occupations in fields in which they are underrepresented.

Strengthening the federal commitment to support delivery of high-quality CTE programs.

- Codifies core secondary and postsecondary performance indicators in both the State plan and Local application, so that federal investment will be targeted to high-quality programs that are aligned with labor market needs; and requires that recipients of federal funding are accountable for ensuring that CTE students acquire the 21st century skills necessary for in-demand occupations within high-growth industry sectors.
- Ensures equitable access to federally-funded CTE programs, by retaining the U.S. Department of Education's full authority to approve state and local plans, support program improvement, and monitor and enforce statutory requirements that will ensure program quality and educational equity for CTE students. Requires states to set ambitious levels of performance for program quality that are submitted in the state plan and subject to approval by the Secretary of Education.
- Authorizes increased appropriations for each year of the bill for a total increase of almost 9 percent over the life of the authorization.