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June 24, 2019

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, D C 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

Job Corps is the nation's largest and most comprehensive education and job training program for at-risk youth, generally between the ages of 16 and 24. The goal of the program is to help these youth obtain the skills they need to find a job, go to college, or enter military service. The Job Corps Program is administered by the Department of Labor's (DOL) Employment and Training Administration (ETA) and enrolls approximately 50,000 students annually. With an annual appropriation of about \$1.7 billion, there are currently 123 Job Corps centers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. The majority of the centers (94 of 123) are operated under contract with various service providers—including private contractors and nonprofit organizations. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Forest Service operates the remaining 25 centers, called Civilian Conservation Centers, under an interagency agreement with DOL.

In May 24, 2019, USDA announced that it would transfer its 25 Job Corps centers to DOL beginning in September of this year. The U.S. Forest Service director reportedly received only four days' notice prior to the announcement. Over the years, the Civilian Conservation Centers have provided valuable training to disadvantaged youth in wildland fire fighting and other fields in rural communities. This action would also have resulted in the layoff of 1,100 Forest Service employees. On June 20, 2019, however, USDA announced that it would be reversing course and that for the time being, it will not be transferring these centers to DOL. However, USDA states that it still intends to conduct an organizational review to determine the appropriate course of action for these centers moving forward. Given the ongoing review of plans for these centers, we are requesting that GAO conduct the following work to assist us in understanding the process and its implications:

- 1) What factors did DOL and USDA consider in selecting USDA Job Corps centers for closure and privatization?

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- 2) To what extent, if at all, did DOL and USDA comply with all statutory requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) pertaining the May 2019 announcement to close USDA Job Corps centers, including communicating required information to the Congress and other stakeholders?
- 3) Did USDA prepare a cost estimate for the drawdown of the centers operated by the Forest Service, including costs related to personnel and closure of facilities?
- 4) What impact, if any, did the announcement of USDA center closures in May 2019 have on Forest Service recruitment and enrollment activities?

Thank you for your consideration of this request. If you have any questions, please contact Katherine McClelland (katherine.mcclelland@mail.house.gov) or Cathy Yu (cathy.yu@mail.house.gov) on the Committee on Education and Labor staff at 202-225-3725.

Sincerely,



ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT
Chairman