

Opening Remarks of Ranking Member Bobby Scott
Full Committee Markup: *H.R. 2353, “The Strengthening CTE for the 21st Century Act”*
2175 Rayburn House Office Building
Wednesday, May 17, 2017 – 10:00 a.m.

Good morning and thank you, Chairwoman Foxx. Today we are here to build upon this Committee’s bipartisan efforts during the last Congress by considering H.R. 2353, comprehensive and bipartisan reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, or Perkins CTE.

Thirty-two years ago, with the enactment of this law, Congress first recognized the national interest in federal investment for critical skills training and technical education to meet future economic needs. Today, this is something that continues to be true, through continued investment in quality CTE that integrates academic and technical skills to promote student success.

Research is clear: the United States’ workforce is suffering from a “skills gap.” According to the Georgetown University Center on

Education and the Workforce, by 2020, 65 percent of all jobs in the United States will require some sort of postsecondary education or training. Yet, if current trends hold, by 2020 our nation will have more than 5 million fewer skilled workers than necessary to fill those jobs. Federal investment in high-quality career and technical education that is accessible to all students – regardless of background – will help close this skills gap.

CTE programs provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to be both college and career ready. Building on past reauthorizations of Perkins CTE and last year's bill that passed the House 405-5, this proposal continues to improve program quality and services for students most in need of skills training.

This is not the vocational education of the past—today's CTE fosters educational environments that engage students with an integrated curriculum of core academic content and real-world, work-based

relevance. And I am happy to say that H.R. 2353 represents a bipartisan, comprehensive reauthorization that supports America's workforce.

H.R. 2353:

- Increases alignment between CTE and careers;
- Ensures opportunity for underserved students to participate in high-quality CTE programs – and I am especially pleased with the increased focus on serving CTE students in juvenile justice and correctional institutions;
- Allows for increased state and local program flexibility, but holds them accountable to taxpayers by maintaining the vital role of the U.S. Department of Education in oversight and enforcement for program quality, improvement, and equity.

H.R. 2353 also:

- Improves collaboration between secondary and postsecondary educational institutions, industry, employers, and community partners;

- Promotes implementation of innovative CTE programs; and
- Improves outcomes for students, employers, and communities.

Committee Democrats believe that each and every student should have access to high-quality CTE programs that provide the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in the 21st century economy. CTE programs must meet labor-market needs, but must also work for students. They must prepare students, especially historically disadvantaged and underserved students, for success in high-demand jobs that offer living wages, employer benefits, and opportunities for meaningful career advancement.

Committee Democrats recognize that to achieve the goal of high-quality CTE that accessible to all students, Congress must renew, not retreat from, the federal focus on equity of opportunity. And that federal focus includes the longstanding role of the US Department of Education to not only support state and local innovation, but also protect and promote the civil rights of all students and compliance with federal laws.

The Strengthening CTE for the 21st Century Act is a compromise bill that renews the federal focus on equity. The bill strengthens the federal commitment to support delivery of high-quality CTE programs by retaining the U.S. Department of Education's full authority to approve or disapprove state and local plans (including for a state's failure to set sufficiently ambitious performance levels). The bill also requires federal oversight, monitoring, and technical assistance to support program improvement, and maintains the full authority of the Secretary to enforce compliance with statutory program requirements and federal civil rights laws.

But just as with any compromise, there are areas for improvement. One such area is the bill's removal of the Secretary's current law sanction authority for underperforming grantees. While this authority has never been used, its elimination runs counter to this Committee's efforts, throughout this legislation, to align Perkins CTE with the improvement requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

(WIOA). Additionally, while the bill improves upon last year's legislation by disallowing dramatic state disinvestment in CTE, I maintain that states should be leveraging the maximum level of state investment to improve these programs. As this process moves forward, I pledge to work with you, Madame Chairwoman, and with our Senate colleagues to improve any final bill.

Madame Chairwoman, I once again thank you for the bipartisan process that allowed us to work on this reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. I'd also like to thank Representative Krishnamoorthi and Representative Thompson for their bipartisan leadership on this issue. Our nation's students are counting on us here in Congress to make sure they are armed with the skills and knowledge that today's employers demand, and that each and every CTE program is delivering results for students, for industry, and for our nation's economy.

I am committed to working with my colleagues here in Congress to uphold the promise of access to high-quality CTE opportunities for all. Today's committee proceedings represent a step in the right direction, and I look forward to continued collaboration and a bipartisan reauthorization process in the months to come.

Thank you and I yield back.