

Remarks of Ranking Member Robert C. “Bobby” Scott
**Full Committee Hearing: “*Helping Students Succeed by Strengthening the*
Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act”**
2175 Rayburn House Office Building
Tuesday, May 17, 2016 / 10:00 am

Good morning and thank you, Chairman Kline.

We are here today to discuss the critical role of career and technical education, or C.T.E., in preparing our nation’s students for success in the 21st century workforce. Federal investment in CTE programs is authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006, and I am hopeful that today’s hearing will serve as a foundation for a bipartisan comprehensive reauthorization of this important law.

The research is clear: The United States is suffering from a “skills gap” due to our failure to produce enough skilled workers to meet future economic needs. 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, at the current production rate, the United States will fall short by 5 million workers with postsecondary education by 2020.

Investing in high-quality CTE and increasing access to these programs – through the reauthorization of Perkins CTE – must be a prioritized as a solution to bridge that gap.

CTE provides students with the knowledge and skills needed to be both college and career ready. 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’m proud to say that my home state of Virginia is a leader in CTE, with more than half a million sixth through twelfth grade students participating in CTE across the Commonwealth. Virginia has expanded access to CTE programs that equip secondary school students with recognized postsecondary

credentials through innovative programs such as dual enrollment and registered apprenticeships.

As we move forward with reauthorization, we must also prioritize robust investment in high-quality CTE programs in each and every state in order to maintain our nation's status as a leader in the global economy.

The globalization of the marketplace has altered the way the U.S. and other countries compete for business. We certainly can't compete with other countries when it comes to the lowest wages, when many around the world may work for a few dollars or even a few pennies a day. Nor can we compete in terms of location. With today's technology – video-conferencing, smartphones, tablets – workers can now work across the globe from their coworkers.

But the main reason that America remains strong and continues to attract business investment is because we have well-educated workers. Our focus on equitable access and high standards for all students – a system

that focuses on college- and career-ready results – is an economic asset. And while many of today’s CTE programs are successfully providing students with the skills and knowledge that today’s employers demand, there’s more to be done to ensure that each and every CTE program is delivering results for students, for industry, and for our national economy.

We must also do more to spur innovation in the delivery of CTE. We need to reward and replicate programs achieving positive outcomes for students and industry to ensure that CTE is positioned to drive economic success, enhance workforce alignment and increase collaboration between education, industry, employers, and community partners.

While successful CTE programs must meet labor-market needs, they must also work for students. They must prepare them to succeed in in-demand jobs that offer living wages, employer benefits, and opportunities for meaningful career advancement. This requires a renewed federal focus to ensure the opportunity for all students –

especially historically disadvantaged students – to benefit from CTE programs that are relevant, rigorous, and high-quality.

In recent years, this committee, along with our Senate colleagues, completed successful, bipartisan comprehensive reauthorizations of two major laws with which we must align Perkins CTE. I am confident that the bipartisanship and shared commitment to equity in education embodied in both the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and the Every Student Succeeds Act will produce a bipartisan reauthorization of Perkins CTE that empowers states and school districts to make quality CTE available to all students with the guidance and support of the U.S. Department of Education.

It is our obligation to prioritize equity of opportunity when it comes to participating in and benefiting from quality CTE programs. We must preserve and improve program accountability—the federal government has an important role to play in setting high expectations both for systems and for the students those systems serve. In addition, we must

maintain vigorous oversight and enforcement to ensure those expectations matter.

So, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to thank you again for holding this hearing. I would also like to thank our witnesses for coming here to testify. I eagerly await your testimony, as you all are uniquely positioned to provide insight into the challenges, successes, and future of career and technical education. And lastly, I look forward to continuing to work with Chairman Kline on a bipartisan effort to modernize federal support for CTE through reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006.

Questions: