

Opening Remarks of Ranking Member Bobby Scott
Full Committee Markup: *H.R. 5587, “The Strengthening CTE for the 21st Century Act”*
2175 Rayburn House Office Building
Thursday, July 7, 2016 – 10:00 am

Good morning and thank you, Chairman Kline. Today we are here to consider a 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.

The 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 jobs requiring

some postsecondary education. Federal investment in high-quality career and technical education accessible to all students – regardless of background – can 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, today’s bill continues to improve program quality and services for students most in need of skills training. This bill is a positive step forward.

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. 5587 represents a bipartisan, comprehensive reauthorization that supports America’s workforce.

H.R. 5587:

- 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 quality, improvement, and equity.

H.R. 5587 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. While successful CTE programs must meet labor-market needs, they 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 this requires a renewed federal focus to ensure all students benefit from CTE programs that are relevant, rigorous, and high-quality.

As I alluded to earlier, this bill also strengthens the federal commitment to support delivery of high-quality CTE programs. H.R. 5587 retains the U.S. Department of Education's full authority to approve state and local plans, support program improvement, as well as monitor and enforce statutory requirements that will ensure program quality and educational equity for CTE students.

Mr. Chairman, 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 Clark 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 fully bipartisan reauthorization process in the months to come.

Thank you and I yield back.