

Testimony for United States House of Representatives
Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. Senator Tim Kaine
May 17, 2016

Good morning, Chairman Kline, Ranking Member Scott and Members of the Committee.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to discuss an issue of great importance to me -- career and technical education. This hearing is timely; we are at a juncture where in the last two years we reauthorized the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and the Every Student Succeeds Act and now we need to connect the talent pipeline by reauthorizing the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act.

My personal interest in career and technical education or CTE stems from growing up in Kansas City where my dad ran a union-organized ironworking and welding shop. In a good year we had eight employees, in a bad year, five employees. My mother, my brothers, and I worked in my dad's shop. I developed a deep appreciation for the tremendous craftsmanship and skill that went into being an ironworker – this stuck with me for the rest of my life. I then had the chance in 1980 to take a year off from Harvard Law School and go to Honduras where I was the principal of the Instituto Tecnico Loyola. I was able to use the trade that I learned in my dad's ironworking shop to teach students to become welders and carpenters. What I saw in Honduras was the same thing that I saw in the United States - that the acquisition of skills, whether it be welding, carpentry or other skills, is a great path to success in life.

However, in the United States I noticed that we downgrade the importance of career and technical education. Oftentimes in schools, students who were thought to be 'not college material' would get tracked into vocational education. CTE is a very important pathway for life's success and there should not be any stigma surrounding these programs in our society– not in our K-12 schools or in the mindset of parents or guidance counselors. Career and technical education programs are proven solutions for creating jobs, retraining workers – including older workers who need to find new skills so they can be successful and fill open jobs in the market -- and ensuring students from of all ages and walks of life are ready for a successful career. Many times CTE is overlooked in discussions on increasing relevancy and rigor in our nation's schools – despite the fact that a strong focus on academics is the cornerstone of high-quality CTE.

When I was Governor of Virginia, I worked on a number of education initiatives, but one that I am the most proud of was starting the Governor's Career and Technical Academies. In Virginia, we had 17 Governor's schools that were college preparatory regional magnet public high schools. However, when I was running for Governor, I realized that we did not have a single career and technical education school or program in the Commonwealth that we deemed fit to carry the Governor's label. So when I became Governor we started the Governor's Career and Technical Education Academies. By the end of my term we had nine schools with this label. The Republican Governor who followed me liked the idea and just renamed them Governor's STEM Academies; there were 23 at the end of his term. The now-Democratic Governor is continuing to expand the

number of schools. As a result, we now have academies around the Commonwealth of Virginia developed as partnerships among schools, employers and postsecondary institutions that confer these skills. Virginia has continued to make advances in CTE by requiring students to have at least two credits in CTE to graduate high school, and most recently passing a bill in the General Assembly to redesign high schools with workforce training in mind.

In the Senate, I have made CTE my main educational priority. The House for a number of years had a House CTE Caucus, but the Senate did not. Together with my Senate colleagues, Senator Portman and Senator Baldwin, we formed the Senate Career and Technical Education Caucus. The goal of the Caucus is to educate members and staff about CTE through briefings and site visits, and to introduce legislation that promotes the integration of CTE into the academic track. Two years ago we led a successful bipartisan effort to expand the Presidential Scholars program, typically awarded for outstanding scholarship and accomplishment in academics and the arts, to include CTE. This year marks the first time the prestigious recognition will be awarded to students who demonstrate ability and accomplishment in CTE fields. We have introduced several pieces of legislation relating to the inclusion of CTE in K-12 education that were incorporated into the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

There are three pieces of bipartisan legislation in particular that I'd like to highlight today that amend the Perkins CTE Act. The first is the Educating Tomorrow's Workforce Act. This bill defines what constitutes a rigorous CTE curriculum, such as credit-transfer agreement opportunities between public schools and institutions of higher education; CTE curriculum alignment with local, regional, and state workforce demands; and CTE-focused professional development for teachers, administrators, and counselors. Additionally, the bill allows states and localities to use Perkins grant funding to establish CTE-focused academies similar to the Governor's academies that I established in Virginia.

Another bill was inspired by my children's own personal experience in public schools. The most challenging year my wife and I experienced as parents of public school students was in middle school. While there is a clear purpose for high school to prepare students for life and career choices, and there is a clear purpose for elementary school about mastering the fundamentals, the purpose of middle school tends to get lost in the shuffle. Middle schools should be reconceived as a time for career exploration. My bipartisan Middle School Technical Education Program Act establishes a pilot program for middle schools to partner with postsecondary institutions and local businesses to develop and implement career and technical education exploration programs that will provide students with introductory courses, hands-on learning, or afterschool activities, as well career guidance and academic counseling to help students understand the various career options available.

It is particularly important for the federal investment in CTE to focus on both quality and equity. As I mentioned earlier, there is a history of tracking students into vocational education, and we must ensure that federal CTE investments replace tracking with choice. Students and their families should have the opportunities to choose high quality CTE pathways that will prepare students for postsecondary education AND the workforce, not postsecondary education or the workforce. CTE

is an effective strategy for keeping students engaged in high school. Once they graduate, they should be able to choose their path forward – their decision should not be made for them due to poor preparation in high school. This is why a group of bipartisan colleagues and I introduced the CTE Excellence and Equity Act. Our legislation will fund quality CTE opportunities that can reduce gaps and provide all students with the opportunity to succeed in the 21st century economy.

All of these bills reflect the core priorities that are important for the Committee to consider when reauthorizing the Perkins CTE Act, including:

- Aligning Perkins CTE with ESSA and WIOA to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of education and workforce development programs
- Strengthening career pathways by expanding work-based learning opportunities and exposure to pathways in earlier grades
- Supporting and expanding partnerships with local businesses, regional industries, institutions of higher education, and other community stakeholders
- Ensuring opportunity for participation in CTE for underserved students and special populations
- Promoting implementation of innovative CTE programs by authorizing an evidence-based innovation fund
- Ensuring reliable and meaningful data is being collected to inform workforce systems and curriculum in schools
- Maintaining and strengthening the federal commitment to deliver high-quality CTE programs

Historically, the federal role in education has been to preserve and promote equity. The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act is a critical component of the federal's government's strategy to promote equity and support the development of career and technical skills among secondary and postsecondary students. We need to make changes that help keep students engaged in their futures while also ensuring our educational programs are adequately preparing students for the jobs of the 21st century. It is essential for the United States to invest in creating a world-class system of education across the spectrum to ensure that we have the technically skilled and well-trained workforce that we need. In today's world, talent and human capital are the most precious asset.

Democrats and Republicans together passed both the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and the Every Student Succeeds Act. It is now time that we reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. In the past the bill has been bipartisan and currently the Senate is working a in a bipartisan manner to pass it through the HELP Committee and eventually the full Senate. I hope that this Committee and the House can do the same.

Thank you again for allowing me to testify at this hearing and I'm happy to take any questions.