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June 24, 2019

The Honorable R. Alexander Acosta  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Labor  
200 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20210

Dear Secretary Acosta:

I write regarding my deep concern with the Department of Labor's (Department) management of the Job Corps program. Job Corps operational slots have steadily declined since the start of this Administration despite Congress having provided stable funding levels. In addition to the decline in operational slots, Job Corps' current on-board strength is only around 80 percent compared to a historical average in the high 90s. Given Job Corps' persistent low on-board strength, I am concerned about the expiration or possible impoundment of Job Corps funds. I am also concerned about the apparent lack of progress in the Department's efforts to correct deficiencies in recruitment tactics. To better help the Committee understand the Department's commitment to and plans for the continued success of this vital program, I request the following information and documents:

1. Please provide a list of the on-board-strength of students at each Job Corps center. Please also provide a description of steps the Department is taking to ensure that each Job Corps center reaches full capacity, including a timeline of when the Department hopes to accomplish this.
2. Please provide a list of the on-board strength of staff for each Job Corps office and center. Please also provide a description of steps the Department is taking to ensure that staffing levels are at full strength, including a timeline of when the Department hopes to accomplish this.
3. Section 161(a) of WIOA requires DOL to prepare and submit reports to Congress that include information about implementing financial oversight measures suggested in a 2013 DOL IG report about oversight of Job Corps funding, a description of any budgetary shortfalls in the period covered by the report, and an explanation for approving

contract expenditures that are in excess of the amount specified under a contract. The reports are to be provided every six months for an initial three-year period, then annually for another two years. Please submit the most recent report in accordance with the requirements of Section 161(a)(1).

4. Please state how much surplus operational funding ETA anticipates Job Corps having in PY 2018. Please also provide a detailed description of what this surplus funding will be redirected towards. Please also provide a full accounting of PY 2018 operational funds.
5. The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) has found that the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) has recently allowed Job Corps funding to expire.<sup>1</sup> Please provide a detailed description of the controls the Department has in place to prevent this from happening again so that all the funding Congress has appropriated for Job Corps is being spent on Job Corps' students and mission prior to expiration.
6. The Department has decades of data on individual Job Corps centers' operations budgets, which should allow for precise estimates of year-to-year operational costs after accounting for inflation. Outside of on-board strength, please provide a detailed description of what accounts for the greatest variability in Job Corps center operations budgets.
7. Section 145(c) of P.L. 113-128 requires the Department to produce a geographic assignment plan for Job Corps every two years. Please share the current geographic assignment plan and the date it was created. Please also provide a detailed timeline for when the next geographic assignment plan will be updated.
8. Please provide a detailed description and any supporting documents of how ETA measures the efficacy and effectiveness of its national marketing efforts and outreach and admissions efforts.
9. Section 159(h) of P.L. 113-128 requires the Department to annually submit to Congress a list of construction, rehabilitation, and acquisition (CRA) projects at Job Corps centers. Further, the FY2020 budget request describes a number of major concerns regarding the building and infrastructure deficiencies, saying the associated costs to correct these has increased by more than 100 percent, yet the budget calls for a decrease in the budget for Operation and Maintenance of Facilities, and level funding from FY2019 for other construction related line items.
  - a. Please provide a full accounting of the CRA projects the Department has analyzed as described in the FY2020 budget request.

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<sup>1</sup> Office of Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Labor, "Semiannual Report to Congress: October 1, 2017–March 31, 2018." Volume 79

- b. Please state the Department's rationale for requesting less funding for construction, rehabilitation, and acquisition projects at Job Corps.
10. Please describe the current status of the Kicking Horse Job Corps Center in Montana, including a timeline for when the Department plans to reopen it.
11. Please describe and provide supporting documentation the communications that the Department had with the City of Gainesville about plans for the Gainesville Job Corps Center prior to closing it, as well as the communication prior to announcing plans for a demonstration project.
12. Please describe the current status of the Arecibo Job Corps Center in Puerto Rico, including a timeline for when the Department plans to reopen it.
13. Please describe the current status of the Atlanta Job Corps Center, including a timeline for when the Department plans to reopen it.
14. Please describe the current status of the Gulfport Job Corps Center, including a timeline for when the Department plans to fully reopen it.
15. Section 159(h) of P.L. 113-128 requires the Department to annually submit to Congress information regarding the national and community service activities of Job Corps enrollees at Civilian Conservation Centers (CCCs). Please submit the most recent copy of this report.
16. Section 159(c)(4) of P.L. 113-128 requires the Department to annually submit to Congress a report on the performance of each Job Corps center. Please submit the most recent copy of this report.
17. The Department appears to be taking great liberties with the letter and intent of provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), including its approach with respect to demonstration projects. The Department's stated rationale for pilots and demonstrations is to test new models with the goals of improving performance in Job Corps. WIOA allows the Secretary to "carry out experimental, research, or demonstration projects relating to carrying out the Job Corps program. The Secretary may waive any provisions of this subtitle that the Secretary finds would prevent the Secretary from carrying out the projects *if* the Secretary informs the Committee on Education and the Workforce of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate, in writing, not less than 90 days in advance of issuing such waiver."
  - a. Please provide a comprehensive list of all proposed and current Job Corps sites slated for demonstration projects.
  - b. Please provide a timeline and explanation regarding when and how the Department alerted Congress of the recent demonstration projects that DOL is carrying out, including copies of any communications sent to Congress.

- c. Please state the criteria, with respect to current Job Corps center performance, that the Department is utilizing when selecting sites for pilots or demonstration projects.
  - d. Please describe how the Department plans to assess the success of these pilots relative to the previous performance of the center under the current model of performance levels.
  - e. If a pilot model does not require compliance with the Policy and Requirements Handbook, please explain how the Department will ascertain whether differences in performance are the results of different operators/models versus greater flexibility from the Department's policy requirements.
  - f. Please describe how the Department analyzed the performance of previous demonstration projects to determine the necessity and success of each of the planned demonstration projects
  - g. Please provide a detailed description of how the Department is funding these demonstration projects.
  - h. The Department has said it wants to test new models in Job Corps, yet one of the demonstration projects that has been announced is a grant for a National Guard Job ChalleNGe program in Florida. Job ChalleNGe is not a new program. In 2015, the Department awarded \$12 million in grants to four sites under the pilots and demonstration authority of the Workforce Investment Act to test this model. The Department's Chief Evaluation Office is in the midst of a 5-year evaluation of the program. Please explain the justification for decreasing Job Corps slots to replicate an existing program before that program's ongoing evaluation is complete.
  - i. Please explain in detail the purpose of the Job Corps Scholars program and how it will not duplicate existing grant programs that support community colleges or existing grants that directly support college students.
18. The Department's FY2020 Budget Request calls for flexibility to prioritize the enrollment of students aged 20 to 24, which necessarily means that fewer services would be made available to 16 to 19-year-old students.
- a. Please explain how this priority is in line with WIOA or Congressional intent to serve populations with higher outcome metrics.
  - b. Please provide a detailed explanation of DOL's plan to further prioritize services for 16 to 19-year-old Job Corps students.

The Honorable R. Alexander Acosta

June 24, 2019

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I request that you provide the information and documents as soon as possible, but in no case later than July 8, 2019.

Thank you for your attention to this request. If you have any questions, please contact Katherine McClelland ([katherine.mcclelland@mail.house.gov](mailto:katherine.mcclelland@mail.house.gov)) or Cathy Yu ([cathy.yu@mail.house.gov](mailto:cathy.yu@mail.house.gov)) on the Committee on Education and Labor staff at 202-225-3725. Please send all official correspondence relating to this request to [tylease.fitzgerald@mail.house.gov](mailto:tylease.fitzgerald@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely,



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**ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT**  
Chairman