

April 16, 2012

Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the National Council of La Raza (NCLR)—the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States—I strongly urge you to oppose the “Workforce Investment Improvement Act of 2012” (H.R. 4297) and to support the “Workforce Investment Act of 2012” (H.R. 4227). H.R. 4297 would severely reduce the public workforce investment system’s ability to provide the targeted and intensive workforce preparation services that both job-seekers and employers need the most.

Latino workers are our economic future: currently 15% of workers, Latinos will account for fully one-third of the labor force by 2050. But there is ample evidence that one-size-fits-all workforce programs have a tendency to ‘cream,’ focusing limited resources on those workers most ready for employment; less than half of those currently receiving intensive services or training under the Workforce Investment Act are low-income. Without direction to focus on workers who need intensive services—such as Latinos with limited basic education or English skills—our workforce investment system has tended to prioritize a high volume of job placements that require limited intervention. H.R. 4297 would exacerbate this through measures to:

- Eliminate, both by repeal and consolidation, more than two dozen programs serving a range of populations and service needs and form a single workforce investment fund
- Eliminate the priority of service provision for low income individuals and public assistance recipients
- Remove the requirement to include a range of community stakeholders as board members

The goal of improving our workforce investment system’s efficiency can be accomplished without tearing it down. An alternative proposal, the “Workforce Investment Act of 2012” (H.R. 4227), would strengthen the system’s relevance in the new economy while ensuring that Latino and other groups of high-needs workers receive services through measures to:

- Reward meaningful service to low-skilled individuals attaining “measurable basic skill gains”
- Ensure that services meet businesses’ needs by emphasizing sector-based approaches and acquisition of industry-recognized credentials
- Encourage system alignment and efficiency through coordination among programs providing adult education, job training, postsecondary education, and supportive services

NCLR urges you to oppose H.R. 4297, which eliminates crucial workforce programming in favor of light-touch interventions, and to support H.R. 4227, which encourages strategic and intensive workforce development that meets both workers' and businesses' needs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eric Rodriguez', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Eric Rodriguez
Vice President
Office of Research, Advocacy, and Legislation