



April 5, 2024

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chair
House Education and the Workforce Committee
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Ranking Member
House Education and the Workforce Committee
2101 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Foxx and Ranking Member Scott,

On behalf of America Forward, we write in strong support of the A Stronger Workforce for America Act (H.R. 6655). We lead the America Forward Coalition of 100+ social innovation organizations advocating for more effective, innovative, and equitable federal policies. The America Forward Coalition includes numerous organizations that deliver or help facilitate programs with a track record of providing economic mobility in high-need fields. We are pleased that H.R. 6655 institutes long-needed, foundational improvements to make our nation's workforce system work better for many of the participants and programs our Coalition serves.

We appreciate that the bill incorporates many of our recommendations around performance improvement, data and learning, accessibility, and coordination, including provisions that will:

- Make essential investments in data infrastructure as a starting point for improvement, such as authorizing and increasing investment in the Workforce Data Quality Initiative, establishing that States shall facilitate administrative data linkages for providers, enabling States to leverage the National Directory of New Hires, and improving reporting on eligible training providers;
- Drive performance improvement by making significant foundational changes regarding WIOA formula funding, including requiring that local areas spend 50 percent on skills development, requiring states to establish minimum standards for eligible training providers tied to key labor market outcomes, and making performance measure reforms that aim to shift the focus from compliance to improvement;
- Introduce evidence-based strategies throughout state and local planning and investments as a starting point to expand investment in approaches proven to increase economic mobility;
- Institute reforms that promise to unlock the potential of pay-for-performance contracting to drive stronger, more equitable outcomes, such as raising the counterproductive caps on such contracts under current law;
- Cut red tape for providers and participants, including allowing participation in training programs while eligibility determinations are ongoing and streamlining the eligible training provider list application process;
- Establish innovative systems reforms, such as the Critical Industry Skills Fund option for States, a state innovation demonstration authority, and a new Job Corps Scholars innovation authority – though we note this Job Corps reform would be stronger if high-impact, non-institutional providers were eligible to participate; and
- Authorize the valuable Strengthening Community College Training Grants and Reentry Employment Opportunities (REO) programs.



In addition to the bill's creative system-level innovations, we believe that we must expand complementary investment in the programmatic innovation that is essential to enable our workforce system to respond effectively to a changing labor market and the emerging needs of employers, workers, and communities. Specifically, we support the inclusion of a Workforce Development Innovation Fund (WDIF), which is a tiered evidence fund to support the development and scale-up of evidence-based employment and training programs that generate demonstrated, long-term improvements for jobseekers and employers, as well as high-quality evaluations. Senator Michael Bennet's Better Jobs through Evidence and Innovation Act (S. 4008) authorizes this type of innovation fund, and we would like to continue to work with you and others in Congress to incorporate this type of Fund in a final WIOA reauthorization.

Thank you again for your work on this important bipartisan legislation, which goes a long way to strengthen our nation's workforce programs. We urge all Members of the House of Representatives to support this important legislation.

Sincerely yours,

Chase Sackett
Policy Director
America Forward

Karen Quarles
Government Affairs Director
America Forward