

April 4, 2023

Honorable Mike Johnson

Speaker

U.S. House of Representatives

2433 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Hakeem Jeffries

Minority Leader

U.S. House of Representatives

2433 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson and Minority Leader Jeffries:

Communities in Schools (CIS), a national non-profit network of local affiliates, is pleased to support many of the youth provisions within the bipartisan *H.R. 6655, A Stronger Workforce for America Act*. H.R. 6655 will help keep at-risk students in school and also serve to re-engage opportunity youth by providing them skills to succeed in the workforce and other post-high school opportunities. **CIS serves almost 2 million students across 25 states and the District of Columbia, and our results are tremendous – in the 2021- 2022 school year, 78% of participating students improved academic performance, 94% graduated or received a GED, and over 99% stayed in school.** The local CIS affiliates work to provide and connect students with integrated support services (ISS) to keep them on a path to graduation, surround students with a community of support, and empower them to stay in school to develop skills for lifelong success. The ISS model includes preventive services that are available to all students as well as intensive, targeted, and sustained services provided through case management. **Due to the critical youth provisions in H.R. 6655 and the strong, bipartisan nature of the bill, we strongly urge its swift passage through the U.S. House of Representatives.**

CIS is particularly pleased to see that the bill includes the following elements related to youth:

- Providing more flexibility to local areas, working with the State, to determine the amount of funds that should be allocated for in-school versus opportunity youth based on the area's specific needs;
- Allowing more funds to serve in-school youth by applying a reduced percentage cap to serve opportunity youth statewide rather than to each local area;
- Providing flexibility for in-school youth to use "Individual Training Accounts" for skills development programs outside of the courses offered by their school district; and
- Allowing programs to begin serving youth while eligibility is determined to maximize the time that services are provided.

As bill moves through the legislative process, CIS hopes to continue to work with leadership to make sure that the bill is clear **that integrated student supports (ISS) are considered a key component in youth success.** Many CIS affiliates have accessed WIOA youth funds in the past and achieved tremendous results for youth, but it is not always clear to local boards that ISS providers should be utilized and supported with WIOA funds, and many are already positioned to drive WIOA outcomes. **Directly including ISS in appropriate areas in the bill will help alleviate this confusion.**

Thank you for your hard work in crafting a thoughtful, bipartisan bill to reauthorize the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. **We look forward to seeing this bill move through the House and will urge the Senate to take it up as soon as possible.** Please contact Jennifer Herrera, Principal of Policy and Leg Affairs at CIS at HerreraJ@cisnet.org with any questions.

Sincerely,

Rey Saldana



President and CEO

CC:

The Honorable Virginia Foxx, Chair, House Education and the Workforce Committee

The Honorable Bobby Scott, Ranking Member, House Education and the Workforce Committee