Letter to Congress regarding WIOA Reauthorization Principles & Recommendations

June 04, 2024

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chairwoman
Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Sanders, Ranking Member Bill Cassidy, Chairwoman Foxx, Ranking Member Scott, and Other Congressional Leaders:

As Congress considers reauthorizing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) would like to put forward a set of guiding principles and high-level recommendations to inform this work.

As a non-profit and non-partisan organization whose membership is comprised of workforce agencies in all fifty states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories, NASWA brings a unique and diverse perspective to the challenges facing our nation's workforce. Our members are on the frontlines of policy development and service delivery for programs as varied as workforce development, unemployment insurance, labor market information, veteran reemployment, and registered apprenticeship. Notably, our members administer a broad range of programs authorized under WIOA and are key partners within the nation's public workforce system.

Our organization and its state workforce agency members are keenly aware of the many unique challenges facing the U.S. economy and labor market. Global competition continues to impose pressures on American businesses and workers; ongoing technological change and the more recent ascent of artificial intelligence pose risks to workers across a range of occupations; industries, businesses, and workers continue to recover from the disruptions stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic; and Page 2 of 11 an aging population has the potential for significant labor shortages in the coming years.

Recognizing these many challenges and acknowledging the need for workforce system reform, NASWA's Employment & Training Committee, which brings together state workforce development directors from across the country, has collaborated over the course of several months on a set of recommendations for WIOA Reauthorization. This work builds upon: (1) NASWA's 2024 Legislative Priorities (link); (2) more than 40 pages of individual state comments NASWA collected on the House of Representatives' WIOA Reauthorization Bill (A Stronger Workforce for America Act, H.R. 6655); (3) several discussions held between NASWA's members and Congressional Committee staff; and (4) a series of discussions held within NASWA's Employment & Training Committee.

Ultimately, these recommendations fall under the following six guiding principles:

1. A public workforce system with **a prominent state role**.
2. A public workforce system that is **agile, flexible, and innovative**.
3. A public workforce system that is **accessible and equitable**.
4. A public workforce system that is **aligned and coordinated**.
5. A public workforce system that is **evidence-based and data-informed**.
6. A public workforce system that is **sufficiently funded**.

We appreciate the work Congress has done to date to advance meaningful reforms to WIOA and especially appreciate the willingness of Committee staff to engage in productive policy discussions with our members on topics as varied as WIOA's performance accountability system, state statutory funding formulas, staffing flexibility, and our concerns around the House Bill's proposed minimum 50 percent training requirement for Adult and Dislocated Worker program funds.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of these recommendations, which we hope can meaningfully inform and contribute to Congress' ongoing deliberations around WIOA Reauthorization. Going forward, we welcome the opportunity to engage further and continue serving as a resource on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Michael A. Harrington
NASWA Board Chair President & CEO
Commissioner, Vermont Department of Labor

Scott B. Sanders
President & CEO
NASWA

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