

The Perkins Modernization Act of 2015

To amend the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 and use labor market information to align career and technical education with current and emerging workforce demands

Summary

- The Perkins Modernization Act of 2015 would improve the federal investment in career and technical education (CTE) by focusing on workforce alignment and by using labor market information to ensure that the skills schools teach are aligned with the skills employers demand.
- By incorporating the definition of “***in-demand industry sectors or occupations***” from the bipartisan Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, and applying it to CTE under Perkins, this bill would have administrators examine workforce data and clearly identify which industry sectors and occupations are in-demand in the labor markets served by CTE programs.
- In ensuring that CTE curriculum is aligned with the skills and credentials employers seek in labor markets where students plan to work, this legislative update reaffirms and strengthens the important bipartisan purpose of the Perkins Act—preparing CTE students to succeed in the modern workforce.

Background

- The Carl D. Perkins Act is important bipartisan legislation that forms the foundation of federal investment in career and technical education. It authorizes formula funding to State boards of CTE and sub grants to local education agencies and postsecondary institutions, including community colleges. This funding builds on the efforts of states and localities to develop students’ academic, vocational, and technical skills and prepare them for opportunities to enter the workforce.
- The Perkins Act was last updated in 2006. As we look towards the next comprehensive Perkins reauthorization, this bill seeks to incorporate analysis of workforce data and labor market information into the national activities and state leadership activities authorized by the Perkins Act. Businesses and stakeholders across the country have called for this increased focus on workforce alignment.
- States, federal agencies, local entities, workforce investment boards, and a variety of third-party groups collect and study information on demographics and trends in the American workforce. In using this existing workforce data to shape CTE curriculum, we can better ensure that CTE doesn’t just teach skills that were taught 50 years ago, but gives students the skills that match what employers in strong and growing fields need today.
- Half of all jobs in STEM fields, for example, are now available to workers without a four-year degree, and these jobs pay \$53,000 on average. These jobs, in fields like healthcare, manufacturing, and technology installation, offer bright spots of economic opportunity that CTE graduates must be able to capture.

In-Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations

- The Perkins Modernization Act would tie CTE more closely to the needs of the labor market by ensuring that CTE curriculum prepares students for high skill, high wage employment in “***in-demand industry sectors or occupations***” as defined by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)—bipartisan legislation that overwhelmingly passed the House by a vote of 415-6 in 2014.
- ‘***In-demand industry sectors or occupations***’ as defined by WIOA (29 U.S.C. 3102) are those that have a substantial current or potential impact on regional economies, support jobs that lead to economic self-sufficiency and opportunities for advancement, and have been identified as such by labor market projections and labor market information