

Reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins CTE Act

The re-authorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act provides Congress with a critical opportunity to reinforce the importance of effective, high quality CTE programs in schools that are aligned with college-and-career-readiness standards, as well as the needs of employers. AASA believes there are provisions in the current Perkins Act that must be sustained in any re-authorization, but we also believe changes must be made to the legislation in order to maintain a highly qualified and prepared workforce.

AASA believes it is critical to maintain the current Basic State Grant funding formula for the distribution of funds to states and local school districts and appropriately fund the Basic State Grant program and preserve the state maintenance of effort provisions in current law. If we hope to prepare all students to be college and career ready, we must authorize and appropriate adequate funding for the Perkins program. Attempts to limit the authorization of funding for Perkins or reduce state contributions would be strongly rejected by AASA.

AASA believes the Perkins funding streams allocated for K-12 institutions and higher-education institutions must remain separate. Experience has shown that combining funding streams and requiring grant recipients to craft one unified application disproportionately allocates funding to higher education institutions instead of the local education agencies. There are also practical challenges to requiring districts to choose one post-secondary partner since some districts may have multiple higher-education partners. There are also fewer higher education institutions than secondary school districts, and small and rural districts may struggle to find an institution with which to partner. Greater alignment between secondary and post-secondary institutions is important and AASA supports effort to incentivize this collaboration in Perkins, but requiring a joint funding application is not a wise policy solution.

AASA supports efforts in the next re-authorization to incentivize local school districts to partner more closely with industry and the business community. We want business leaders to weigh in on our programs, practices and professionals, to ensure that our CTE offerings are preparing students to enter the workforce ready to be employed. We also support replacing the Local Perkins plan with a local needs assessment that asks districts to work with relevant stakeholders to consider how the district can create and maintain a high quality CTE program.

The next Perkins re-authorization must also address the data collection burden currently experienced by districts and refocus on amassing appropriate, existing information to determine the effectiveness of CTE programs and students. AASA recommends Congress assess the quality of a CTE program based on the following measures: the percentage of students achieving a technical skill attainment level or certification, the percentage of students enrolled in the CTE program who graduate from high school college-and-career-ready, and the percentage of students that graduate earning dual-enrollment credits.

AASA talking points:

- Maintain the current Basic State Grant funding formula and preserve the state maintenance of effort provisions in current law. Appropriately fund the Basic State Grant and reject efforts to set-aside funds for competitive grant programs
- Ensure Perkins funding for secondary and post-secondary institutions remain separate
- Incentivize greater business participation in secondary CTE programs
- Replace the local Perkins plan with a local needs assessment
- Streamline the accountability provisions in Perkins to collect meaningful data on how well districts are preparing students for post-secondary success