



December 11, 2023

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 congratulate you on the introduction of 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 would institute 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 performance funds, 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.



While the bill institutes a number of creative system-level innovations, the bill does not significantly expand 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. In particular, the bill does not include our call for a Workforce Development Innovation Fund (WDIF) that is supported by our Coalition and an array of key partners. The WDIF would establish 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. As Congress continues its work on this bill, we urge you to consider incorporating provisions of the WDIF in the final version.

Thank you again for your work on this important bipartisan legislation, which goes a long way to strengthen our nation's workforce programs. We look forward to working with you to advance H.R. 6655.

Sincerely yours,

Chase Sackett  
Policy Director  
America Forward

Karen Quarles  
Government Affairs Director  
America Forward