December 2, 2024

Dear Members of the Texas Congressional Delegation:

As you close out the 118th Congress, we understand that one item that may move is reauthorization of federal workforce development programs. Workforce development is a priority for all of us, and we are pleased that the House passed bipartisan legislation (HR 6655) to reauthorize the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA). However, we are deeply concerned about several provisions in the bill that could degrade local control and even lead to the elimination of local workforce investment boards. We urge you to eliminate these threats to local job training programs as Congress completes work on WIOA reauthorization.

We are especially concerned about Section 115 of HR 6655, which would allow governors to almost unilaterally redesignate or even *eliminate* local workforce development areas. Local workforce development areas are the foundation of our nation’s job training infrastructure. Local workforce development boards ensure that job training programs meet the needs of the local economy, as understood by local businesses, local economic development officials, and local elected officials. A strong partnership with the state workforce investment board is critical to the success of local job training programs. However, section 115 would provide governors with the means to unilaterally seize control of all federal workforce development funds and stifle the voice of local employers and officials who best understand local economies, local plans, and local needs.

We are also concerned about language in Section 143 of the bill that would *require* 50% of funds allocated to a local workforce investment board to be used be used to provide eligible individuals with skills development through an individual training account or a contract with an employer or provider, such as for “on-the-job training,” “incumbent worker training,” “employer-directed skills development,” and pay-for-performance contracts. While no doubt well intentioned, this provision would impose a one-size-fits-all solution that limits the ability of local workforce development boards to tailor job training programs to local needs and conditions and to nimbly respond to changing local dynamics.

In addition, section 131 of HR 6655 would allow governors to reserve 10% of federal job training funds for a Critical Industries Skills Fund, which would increase the amount of funding reserved by governors to 25%. While local workforce investment boards would be eligible to apply for these funds, the reality is that few if any governors will share these funds, hurting local workforce development efforts.

Despite the threat these three provisions pose to local job training programs, there are many positive provisions in HR 6655, and we are pleased that Congress is working on a bipartisan basis to reauthorize federal job training programs.

Thank you for your attention to this issue and for all you do for Texas and our communities.

Sincerely,