

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 29, 2006

The Honorable Arlen Specter
Chairman, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, and Education
184 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor
Health and Human Services, and Education
123 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Specter and Ranking Member Harkin:

We are writing to express our strong support for restoring funding to fiscal year 2005 levels for Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and Employment Service programs in fiscal year 2007 Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations.

In today's fast-paced global economy, the American workforce continues to undergo profound changes that require all workers to acquire advanced skills, which is key to keeping the nation's competitive stronghold. That is why the need to invest public resources in education and job training is so crucial.

This year, 15 million workers, or more than one in ten workers nationally, will seek assistance from our nation's employment and training programs. The most recent data from the Bureau of Labor statistics indicates that while the overall unemployment level has decreased recently, there are still one million more unemployed workers than there were in 2001 and the number of long term unemployed has risen by 71%.

WIA is an employer-led system that provides skills training for a demand driven economy, providing workers with the skills that employers need. More and more employers recognize the interdependency of workforce training and economic competitiveness and are increasing their support for job training. With a solid investment in America's job training system, skill levels of the workforce become an asset to global economic competitiveness, rather than a deficit.

However, investment in employment and training programs has been diminishing, with WIA and Employment Services at \$1 billion below funding levels enacted five years ago. Continued decreases in funding for federal job training programs will force One Stop Career Centers around the nation to close their doors, and our ability to train our most valuable economic resource, our workers, will be greatly diminished, threatening our nation's economic security.

We recognize that tough funding choices will have to be made in this very difficult fiscal environment. The strong, continuing, and bi-partisan Congressional support for the Workforce Investment Act programs reflects accurately our commitment to ensure our nation's workers and employers have access to critical workforce services.

We urge you to ensure that appropriations for education and job training programs in FY 2007 reflect this commitment to our nation's employment and training system.

Sincerely,

Maria Carbone

Anton Collins

Paul Wynn

Frank R. Santenberg

Dick Durb

Jim Jelford

Ken Salzman

Reggie

Bill Nelson

Tom F. Kelly

Robert A. Nicholas

Daniel K. Skaka

Phil

Rebbie Stenew

Rick Sugar

Jim

Patrick Leahy

Robert Meneuf

Jack Reed

Bob

Bubba Buford

John Johnson

Mark Dayton

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Patty Murray

Jeanne Feinstein

Chuck Schumer

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Herb Kohl

John McCain

Paul Barbera

Blanche L. Lincoln

Norm Feingold

Norm Coleman

Chris Brown

Mike DeWine

Max Baucus

