



★ CareerTech ★
Legislative
Priorities
2022

403



2022 Legislative Agenda



The Oklahoma Association for Career and Technical Education, OkACTE, advocates for policy and legislation that best serves and protects the integrity of the Oklahoma Career and Technology system. OkACTE's Legislative Agenda lists objectives for legislative action at the state level on issues that affect the Oklahoma CareerTech System. This document is typically issued each January, prior to Legislative Session, and is focus of the Executive Director while at the Oklahoma State Capitol.

FUNDING AND RELATED PRIORITIES

- Fully fund the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education's 2023 budget increase by 34 million, of which will:
 - Increase support for existing K-12 CTE Programs (411 & 412 funding)
 - Increase enrollment capacity at Technology Centers
 - Increase training services to Oklahoma's Employers
 - Increase services at Oklahoma Skills Centers
 - Fully fund of the Flex Benefit Allowance for all educational employees
- Support full funding of the Oklahoma Ad Valorem Reimbursement Fund
- Expand Oklahoma's state minimum salary schedule to recognize teachers serving more than 25 years.
- Support a Cost of Living Adjustment for all TRS retirees.

CAREER GUIDANCE & ACADEMIC SUCCESS

- Support continued professional development to fully implement Individualized Career Academic Plans (ICAP) for all students.
- Re-align Oklahoma's high school graduation requirements by eliminating the dual diploma system and creating graduation requirements that allow students to best pursue their careers of choice as identified through the Individualized Academic and Career Plan (ICAP) process.
- Allow students to transcript imbedded academic content gained through high quality career and technical education programs.
- Ensure that Oklahoma's promise is available to all eligible students including those who participate in high quality career and technical education programs at Technology Centers.

ECONOMIC & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

- Fully support legislation that encourages sound growth in emerging and expanding industries such as but not limited to film, movies, music, aerospace, manufacturing and healthcare.
- Support legislation that provides all taxing jurisdictions an equal voice in the development and approval of economic development incentives such as Tax Increment Financing districts.
- Support legislation that streamlines and further clarifies the protesting process for Oil, Gas & Wind in regards to school ad valorem dollars.
- Support expansion of work-based learning opportunities that ensure the availability of a highly skilled workforce for Oklahoma employers.
- Support legislation that reduces employer risk when partnering with educational entities to provide work-based learning opportunities for students
- Support legislation that promotes expansion of industry and education and industry partnerships to ensure all employers have access to a highly skilled/highly educated workforce.
- Support legislation encouraging Law Enforcement and Public Safety training partnerships.

LEGISLATIVE POSITIONS

OkACTE actively works to promote awareness of the following items for OkACTE membership.

- ◆ *Maintain the Oklahoma Department of CareerTech as an independent state agency supporting all facets of Oklahoma's career and technical education programs.*
- ◆ *Maintain the Oklahoma Teacher Retirement as a stand-alone retirement system with the existing defined benefit plan.*
- ◆ *Support local control for Boards of Education in making educational and financial decisions.*

Investing in Oklahoma's Workforce

FY22 General Appropriation\$134,641,723

- Meet the statutory requirement of funding flex benefit allowance for technology centers.....\$900,000
- Support growth and investment in current and unfunded programs in PK-12 schools, such as agricultural education, family consumer sciences; science, technology, engineering, and math; business, marketing and information technology.....\$8,500,000
- Enrich industry sectors with customized training and specialized workforce educational programs in all delivery arms meeting the needs of these industries: aerospace, agriculture, construction, energy, health, information technology, manufacturing and transportation \$20,000,000
- Expand Skills Centers and dropout recovery to meet the needs of individuals working to reach their career goals while turning the corner in their lives \$2,500,000
- Strengthen agency operations by investing to retain and recruit exceptional employees while maintaining critical infrastructure. This would include support for Oklahoma JAG (Jobs for American Graduates)..... \$2,100,000

FY23 General Appropriation Request.....\$168,641,723



CTE in Oklahoma



The Oklahoma economy is experiencing a skills gap...

55% of jobs in Oklahoma require skills training—more education than high school but less than a four-year degree.

47% of Oklahoma workers are trained at this level.



Oklahoma CareerTech students earned 14,885 industry-endorsed certificates in 2020.

Career and technical education (CTE) programs can fill these gaps, particularly in Oklahoma's key industries, like:

- agribusiness
- manufacturing
- renewable and traditional energy
- transportation and logistics

Many students are already enrolled in CTE in Oklahoma, developing technical, academic and employability skills and engaging in work-based experiences with industry partners. During the 2019-20 school year, Oklahoma had:

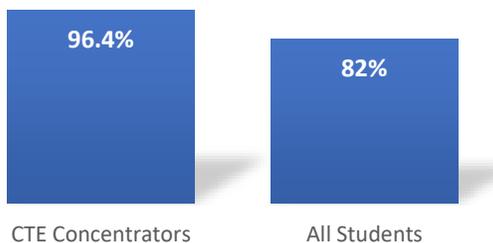
147,913

secondary CTE participants

34,879

postsecondary/adult CTE participants

These youth and adult learners in CTE programs are more engaged, graduate high school at higher rates, earn industry-recognized credentials, and have rewarding and family-sustaining careers.



Four-year cohort graduation rate in Oklahoma (2017-18)

20,638

postsecondary credentials earned by CTE students in Oklahoma (2019-20)



More investment is needed to scale CTE programs across Oklahoma to ensure that all learners, including historically underserved learners, have access to high-quality CTE programs in high-skill, high-wage and in-demand career fields.

CTE: Good for Students, Good for Business, Good for Communities!

FY 21 Federal Perkins CTE Funding for Oklahoma

\$16,997,016

2022 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

1. Increase Federal Investments in CTE

- **Significantly increase funding for the Perkins Basic State Grant.**

The Perkins Basic State Grant program is the principal source of dedicated federal funding for CTE, which helps build the capacity of secondary and postsecondary institutions to serve millions of students nationwide. In FY 2022, Perkins was funded at just \$1.38 billion, or approximately 1.8% of the total federal investment in education. Increasing Perkins funding will expand access to high-quality CTE programs to a greater number of secondary, postsecondary and adult learners. Therefore, we urge Congress to support our students and future workforce by **significantly increasing funding for the Perkins Basic State Grant program in FY 2023.**

- **Make long overdue contributions to the nation's workforce systems to aid economic recovery.**

In 2021, Congress proposed **\$40 billion in investments for CTE and workforce systems** in the Build Back Better Act. This investment would have included an additional \$700 million for the Perkins Act, \$5 billion for a Community College and Industry Partnership grant program, and \$1.2 billion for the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training program. This funding is much needed to close the nation's longstanding skills gap, supply enough trained workers to rebuild the nation's infrastructure, and upskill and reskill Americans whose careers were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. We request that Congress find a vehicle to **pass funding that is urgently needed for these critical programs.**

2. Enhance Education Programs to Promote U.S. Global Competitiveness

- **Expand the Pell Grant to high-quality short-term certificate programs.**

Short-term certificate programs allow students to quickly gain skills and credentials that lead to substantial wage gains and increased career opportunities in high-demand fields. The **JOBS Act (S. 864/H.R. 2037)** is a bipartisan proposal that would expand eligibility to students who are seeking these certificates at high-quality public postsecondary institutions. The America COMPETES Act of 2022 (H.R. 4521), as passed in the House, was amended to include language similar to the JOBS Act, but the companion Senate bill does not include a short-term Pell provision. We ask Congress to **include short-term Pell in the final competitiveness package** that will be negotiated this spring.

- **Increase educators' ability to access data on student-level postsecondary outcomes.**

Educators need access to accurate and timely data on student outcomes to ensure programs are meeting learner and employer needs. Moreover, students deserve clarity about the postsecondary options available to them, including accurate information about the careers and salaries that may be

available to them upon graduation. The **College Transparency Act (S. 839/H.R. 2030)** would eliminate the ban on federal student-unit-record data, allowing for the tracking of program-level employment outcomes and information on certificates, licenses and industry-recognized certifications earned by students. Language from this legislation was also included in the recently passed America COMPETES Act of 2022 (H.R. 4521). We ask Congress to **include the College Transparency Act in the final competitiveness package** that will be negotiated this spring.

3. Strengthen Connections Between Education and Workforce Development Systems

- **Better align workforce policy with education programs.**

Our workforce and education systems should be built to operate symbiotically, not in silos. As Congress prepares for reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, we ask that the legislative language **better connect education and workforce programs**, increase access to high-quality training, use relevant labor market information to ensure programs reflect local economic needs, and provide adequate resources and support services for underserved populations. Further, we ask that Congress expand and promote access to registered apprenticeships, including youth and pre-apprenticeships, by **reauthorizing the National Apprenticeship Act**.

4. Support the Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of CTE Educators

- **Improve data collection on the CTE educator pipeline.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated preexisting teacher and staffing shortages and has further depleted the teacher pipeline at all levels of education, including in CTE. However, data on CTE shortages are lacking in comparison to other education specialties. ACTE urges the federal government to **improve federal-level data collection on CTE teachers and on teacher shortages in specific CTE subjects at the secondary and postsecondary levels** so that relevant policies can be developed.

- **Prioritize CTE educators in the creation and improvement of teacher recruitment and retention programs.**

Teachers at all levels experience unacceptable financial barriers to enter and remain in the workforce, such as student loan debt and chronically low pay. While in need of improvement, current programs that provide financial benefits to teachers such as TEACH Grants and the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program have been critical to incentivizing new teachers to enter the workforce with less debt. In addition to preserving and improving the quality of these programs, we must **ensure that all Higher Education Act Title II programs are more accessible to CTE teachers and prioritize CTE educators as a critical shortage area**. Further, the RAISE Act of 2022, which will be introduced later this spring, would give all public school teachers a federal tax reimbursement up to \$15,000 depending on the school poverty level. This would be a transformative change to significantly boost teacher pay and fill shortages in high-need school districts. We urge Congress to **pass the RAISE Act**.

About ACTE

The Association for Career and Technical Education® (ACTE®) is the nation's largest not-for-profit association committed to the advancement of education that prepares youth and adults for successful careers. ACTE represents the community of CTE professionals, including educators, administrators, researchers, school counselors, guidance and career development professionals and others at all levels of education. ACTE is committed to excellence in providing advocacy, public awareness and access to resources, professional development and leadership opportunities.

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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 15, 2022

Dear Colleague:

Career and Technical Education (CTE) is a proven strategy for creating jobs, retraining workers, and ensuring that students of all ages are career- and college-ready. Because CTE is critical for a globally competitive American workforce, we lead the Congressional Career and Technical Education Caucus to highlight its importance in preparing a well-educated and skilled workforce.

According to the most recent data from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, approximately 11 million students participated in secondary and postsecondary CTE programs at thousands of CTE centers, comprehensive high schools, career academies, CTE high schools, and nearly 1,000 two-year colleges. Across the country, CTE programs play a vital role in ensuring that skilled workers are capable of remaining competitive in high-wage, high-skill, and high-demand career fields. CTE programs prepare students for every sector of our economy, ranging from STEM disciplines such as nursing, allied health, construction, information technology, energy, cybersecurity, sustainability, to other fields that keep our nation competitive in the global economy.

The COVID-19 pandemic has displaced millions of American workers and fundamentally changed entire industries within the economy. CTE programs provide workers with upskilling and re-skilling opportunities, allowing for a quicker and more equitable economic recovery. Further, CTE is pivotal in addressing the nation's longstanding skills gap in industries that are critical to our nation's infrastructure, which will need at least 15 million new workers over the next decade. By training a competitive workforce to fulfill these 21st Century demands, CTE programs assist businesses in closing the skills gap every day.

CTE programs exist in every state and congressional district. Therefore, we invite you to join the bipartisan Senate Career and Technical Education Caucus. Together we can improve America's competitiveness and help facilitate job opportunities for our constituents. To join the Senate CTE Caucus, or for more information, please contact Karishma Merchant (karishma_merchant@kaine.senate.gov) in Sen. Kaine's office or Nancy Martinez (nancy_martinez@young.senate.gov) in Sen. Young's office.

Sincerely,



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Rob Portman
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Todd Young
United States Senator



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