

## A STRONGER WORKFORCE FOR AMERICA ACT

### Background

On December 7, 2023, the House Committee on Education and the Workforce Chairwoman Virginia Foxx (R-NC) and Ranking Member Bobby Scott (D-VA) introduced [H.R. 6655](#), the A Stronger Workforce for America Act. The bill was subsequently marked up and passed out of committee later that month. This bill would amend and reauthorize the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA), which succeeded the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. WIOA is the landmark workforce development legislation that is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to navigate a competitive workforce. Given the role of higher education in developing and preparing a high-skilled workforce, several aspects of the legislation impact institutions of higher education.

This high-level summary focuses primarily on elements in the bill that will directly impact institutions of higher education. The House Committee on Education and the Workforce also provided a [brief summary](#) and a [section-by-section summary](#) of the bill.

### Summary

#### Title I – Workforce Development Activities

Title I of WIOA authorizes several state and national programs and activities that support job training and related services to unemployed and underemployed individuals. Programs under Title I are administered by the U.S. Department of Labor.

- H.R. 6655 would require employers to pay between 10 percent and 50 percent (depending on the size of the employer) of the cost of employer-directed skills development.
- The bill instructs local workforce boards to align employment, training, education, and supportive services with career and technical education programs of study described in the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. This bill also requires the Secretary of Education and Secretary of Labor to propose expected state levels of performance for each program.
- The bill changes the performance accountability measures that apply across many of WIOA's programs. These changes include revising indicators of performance to measure skill gains, updating performance reports to include earnings and skills development data, and clarifying instances in which a state or local area can be subject to performance improvement actions or sanctions.
- One-stop career centers are the physical locations that participants interact with for the program. H.R. 6655 would expand eligibility to area career and technical education schools as well as libraries or local boards.
- The bill would expand eligibility to be designated a “provider of training services” beyond institutions of higher education and other approved providers to institutions that offer short-term

programs. The bill also clarifies that online programs that meet existing requirements are eligible to be providers. The bill includes additional provisions impacting training services providers, including institutions of higher education, such as:

- Adding requirements providers must meet, such as performance and outcome measures;
  - Establishing a new conditional eligibility status intended to be utilized by newer programs;
  - Requiring providers to provide programmatic, performance, and accountability information to states, which they must then publicize on an accessible website;
  - Streamlining the application process and requiring states to make a determination of a program’s eligibility within 30 days;
  - Modifying processes for multistate providers and online providers; and
  - Reforming allowable performance incentives and sanctions for approved providers.
- The legislation expands individual training accounts of at least \$5,000 to include select people aged 16-21. The individual training accounts are allocated to local areas, which can be used by eligible participants to pay for approved training activities.
  - It also amends “youth workforce investment activities” to include the establishment of minimum funding amounts for local areas, requirements for statewide youth activities, and the allocation of funds for various youth programs, including summer and year-round employment opportunities.
  - The bill establishes a “Critical Industry Skills Fund” that would offer performance-based payments to entities offering programs that lead to employment or retention in specified industries.
  - The bill amends the “Reentry Employment Opportunities” grant program for nonprofit entities, including institutions of higher education. The Secretary of Labor would be responsible for awarding competitive grants or entering contracts in which 30 percent of such amounts would be awarded to regional or national intermediaries for conducting reentry projects and 30 percent would be awarded to eligible entities using pay-for-performance contracts.
  - The legislation also bolsters the “Strengthening Community Colleges Workforce Development” grant program, for community colleges. The grant would be prioritized to serve individuals with barriers to employment or incumbent workers in need of foundational skills. Community colleges applying for the grant must establish industry partnerships with employers in in-demand industries to implement grant activities.
  - The bill authorizes states to receive the allotments or allocations of consolidated grants for five years to carry out projects demonstrating innovation reforms to achieve better outcomes for job seekers, employers, and taxpayers.

## Title II – Adult Education and Literacy

This title amends the programs for state and local service providers to offer education and skills development programs for American workers, including immigrants and English learners. The legislation would update the purpose of Title II programs to include assisting adults in obtaining digital literacy skills. Funding is distributed for activities assisting eligible adults in obtaining postsecondary education, training, or employment.

- The bill updates the “Adult Education and Literacy” program to include funding to assist adults in obtaining digital literacy skills. Digital literacy skills are defined as “skills associated with using

existing and emerging technologies to find, evaluate, organize, create, and communicate information and to complete tasks.”

- Each eligible state and local agency would be responsible for providing matching funds information. The bill would update the required state leadership activities to identify opportunities to align with activities under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act.

### Title III – Amendments to other Laws

- Funds from H-1B non-immigrant visa fees are allocated to states based on the relative number of unemployed individuals, disadvantaged adults, and individuals in the civilian labor force in each state. Within the state allocations, states are required to allocate funds to eligible dislocated workers through individual training accounts.