

YOUTH WORKFORCE READINESS ACT OF 2023

The Need for Youth Workforce Readiness Investments

- Communities across America face significant challenges in ensuring that youth are adequately prepared to enter the workforce.
- As we look for solutions to address the skills gap, we must look at how we prepare youth for the jobs of the future. 41% of youth express concerns about whether they have the skills necessary to secure a job. At the same time, employers increasingly cite challenges finding well-prepared talent as their greatest obstacle to growth.
- Traditionally, workforce development programs have targeted adults and high school students. New research has identified middle school as an ideal time -- during a critical window of cognitive development --to develop the essential skills youth need for success in school, work and life.
- National out-of-school time organizations have the reach, scale, and experience to prepare today's youth for success in tomorrow's workforce by teaching essential skills like judgment/decision-making, communications, and collaboration which employers named as the most in-demand competencies in the labor market.

Bill Summary

- The bill creates Federal investments and partnerships in youth workforce readiness that will build knowledge, skills development, and learning experiences that prepare young people for the 21st century workforce and boosts their economic potential over a lifetime.
- The legislation establishes a competitive grant through the Department of Labor's Employment & Training Administration, for eligible national, youth-serving, out-of-school time organizations providing programs for youth between the ages of 6 to 18. Programs will focus on four overarching pillars that support youth workforce readiness:
 - Essential-Skill Development: supporting social emotional development through every developmental stage in both formal and informal learning experiences.
 - Career Exposure: targeted programming, through community business partnerships, providing discovery opportunities, career assessments, planning, and insights into both traditional and non- traditional career fields.
 - Employability & Certification: opportunities including; interviewing, resume writing, financial literacy and certifications in specific areas that will help youth land their first job.
 - Work Based Learning: opportunities to apply skills in real-life, hands-on work experiences through local community business partnerships.
- Additionally, the legislation re-establishes Youth Councils to work in coordination with local workforce boards providing expertise in youth policy.

These investments will help increase opportunities for youth to build knowledge and skills, connect to critical real-life work experiences and learning opportunities.

Congressional Sponsors

Given the importance and impact of addressing the skills gap, the bill has bipartisan and bicameral support.

The lead sponsors are:

- Senate: Sen. Tina Smith (D-MN), Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME), Sen. Lindsay Graham (R-SC), Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR)
- House: Rep. Josh Harder (D-CA), Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Rep. McBath (D-GA), and Rep. Chavez-DeRemer (R-OR)