

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of the millions of youth who will make up our country's future workforce, we urge you to co-sponsor ***The Youth Workforce Readiness Act*** (S.454 and H.R. 3416). To support a strong economy, we must invest robustly in our future workforce earlier and build public-private partnerships that work for all stakeholders, including young people and employers.

Right now, employers are facing labor shortages in key industries such as manufacturing, construction, education, and health services ([US Chamber of Commerce](#)), and employers everywhere struggle to find candidates with the essential skills needed for success. Youth are worried about whether they have the skills necessary to secure a job in the face of a rapidly changing economy, and Americans agree that educational priorities for the K-12 years should shift to include practical skills, critical thinking and decision making, and character development ([Education Week 1](#) and [2](#)). While teachers already have more priorities than time during the school year, out-of-school time (OST) organizations and their partners are primed to fill the gap and provide a solution for youth workforce readiness.

Current workforce development policy suffers from a gap in preparing youth starting from an early age to ensure they graduate from high school with a plan and avoid disconnection from the workforce. Out-of-school time organizations partner with businesses, trade associations, workforce development agencies, schools, and post-secondary education to create afterschool and summer programs to fill this gap. These programs help young people develop essential skills to navigate the workplace and life, explore in-demand careers in their community, access targeted skills training, and connect with internships, jobs, and apprenticeships. Especially at a time when youth are facing historic levels of disconnection from school and work, these programs are meeting young people where they are and preparing them for success after graduation.

Investing in a skilled and robust workforce is essential to the future of America's local economies, and it will require strong public-private partnerships. Congress must play its part in this by co-sponsoring and passing the *Youth Workforce Readiness Act*. This bill would establish a competitive grant through the Department of Labor to support eligible youth-serving, out-of-school time organizations that provide workforce preparation programs for youth ages 6 to 18. The program focuses on four pillars that OST organizations know from experience are critical to preparing youth for success: Essential Skill Development, Career Exposure, Employment Readiness & Certifications, and Work-Based Learning. These core approaches are implemented in partnership with local employers and educators to prepare youth for the workforce and help employers fill their gaps with qualified candidates. Lead sponsors of the Senate bill include Senators Tina Smith (D-MN), Lindsey Graham (R-SC), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Susan Collins (R-ME), and lead sponsors of the House bill include Representatives Josh Harder (D-CA), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Lori Chavez-DeRemer (R-OR), and Lucy McBath (D-GA).

Together, we can ensure prosperity for our country by investing in youth workforce readiness. We remain committed to ensuring every young person in America has the skills needed to graduate from high school and achieve success in education, career and life. If you have further questions or require more information, please contact Alex Knapp at [aknapp@bgca.org](mailto:aknapp@bgca.org).

Sincerely,

Afterschool Alliance  
American Camp Association  
American Student Assistance  
BellXcel  
Big Brothers Big Sisters of America  
Boys & Girls Clubs of America  
Communities In Schools  
Forum for Youth Investment  
Girls Inc.  
MENTOR  
National Association of Home Builders  
National Recreation and Park Association  
National Retail Federation  
National Summer Learning Association  
YMCA of the USA  
Youth Jobs Connect