The Honorable Paul Ryan  The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  Democratic Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515  Washington, D.C. 20515


Dear Speaker Ryan and Leader Pelosi:

The undersigned organizations, representing a broad cross section of construction contractor, supplier, and manufacturing organizations, urge you to swiftly pass and enact the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (H.R. 5587), bipartisan legislation that reforms, modernizes, and reauthorizes the Carl D. Perkins Act.

By restoring near-term certainty to federal transportation programs and tax policy through passage of the FAST and PATH Acts in late 2015, Congress has set the stage for growth in construction, manufacturing, and business purchasing. However, as companies prepare to take advantage of new opportunities, they are confronted with a new challenge: a shortage of skilled technical workers.

A recent study sponsored by Associated Equipment Distributors (AED) provides a snapshot of how just one sector of the construction industry is being affected by the national skills gap. The report, which was prepared by researchers at the College of William & Mary, found that the equipment technician shortage is costing dealers approximately $2.4 billion per year in lost revenue and economic opportunity and that the average job open rate for technical positions at construction equipment dealerships is more than three times the national average. Additionally, the study found that a lack of hard skills is the top reason technician positions are going unfilled, that high school, community college, and technical school curricula are not aligned with employer needs, and that the skills gap has hindered company growth and increased costs and inefficiencies.

The AED study also found that the technician shortage has made it difficult to meet customer demand in the varied industries equipment distributors serve (construction, mining, agriculture, energy, etc.), underscoring how a skills gap in one sector of the economy can affect several others.

By enacting H.R. 5587 and reinforcing CTE programs, educators and their partners in the business community can improve student outcomes and provide the skills required to be successful in the workforce (or continuing education). H.R. 5587 focuses on areas where improvements can be made to current law, building upon past successes and enhancing aspects of the long-overdue-for-reauthorization Carl D. Perkins Act in order to better serve both workers and employers. The bill will help:

- Align CTE programs to the needs of the regional, state and local labor markets.
- Support effective and meaningful collaboration between secondary and postsecondary institutions and employers.
- Increase student participation in work-based learning opportunities.
- Promote the use of industry recognized credentials and other recognized post-secondary credentials.

These improvements will more effectively spend federal dollars to help our nation’s students acquire the skills that they need and employers in our industry are demanding.

Simply put, by making technical education a priority, Congress can help better prepare workers for well-paying careers, ensure that U.S. companies are able to seize new business opportunities and make the United States more competitive in the global economy. Businesses, schools and government officials
must collectively commit to tackling the technical education crisis at all levels, and you can take a great step towards enabling that commitment by passing H.R. 5587.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to working with you in a bipartisan manner to seize this important opportunity.

Sincerely,

Air Conditioning Contractors of America
American Coal Ash Association
American Concrete Pavement Association
American Concrete Pipe Association
American Concrete Pressure Pipe Association
American Institute of Steel Construction
American Rental Association
American Road & Transportation Builders Association
American Supply Association
American Traffic Safety Services Association
Associated Equipment Distributors
Association of Equipment Manufacturers
Concrete Reinforcing Steel Institute
Distribution Contractors Association
Heating, Air-Conditioning & Refrigeration Distributors International

Mason Contractors Association of America
National Asphalt Pavement Association
National Association of Manufacturers
National Ground Water Association
National Ready Mixed Concrete Association
National Roofing Contractors Association
National Stone, Sand and Gravel Association
National Utility Contractors Association
Portland Cement Association

Power and Communication Contractors Association
Precast/Prestressed Concrete Institute