

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 22, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader Schumer:

In light of the shifting workforce demands of the 21st century economy and the turbulent labor market of the post-COVID recovery, we call on congressional leadership to ensure robust federal spending for workforce development is prioritized in the upcoming reconciliation package.

For much of the past year, the COVID-19 pandemic brought our economy to a grinding halt, plunging our country and the world into the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. Now, thanks in no small part to historic congressional action, the American economy is roaring back to life, but with surging demand, we are facing new challenges. For many Americans, the post-COVID boom is an opportunity to reskill and upskill, changing jobs and even professions. In the month of May alone, more Americans quit their jobs than in any other month since the Department of Labor started recording turnover statistics, and according to a recent survey, more than 30% of Americans are considering a career change.^{1,2} At the same time, many Americans continue to have difficulties finding work, with more than 9 million unemployed Americans currently unable to find a job, including 4 million long-term unemployed.³

Meanwhile, the landscape of the 21st century economy is changing. Once-dominant industries are contracting, while other sectors are booming, as new technologies and new economic conditions present new opportunities and challenges. The infrastructure proposals currently under consideration reflect this new economy, as do the science and technology bills put forth in both the House and the Senate, but there remains a crucial and unaddressed need to train the workforce of this new economy. Federal spending on workforce training and employment

¹ Mahdawi, Arwa. June 23, 2021. People are quitting their jobs in record numbers. Companies should take note – and treat them better. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jun/23/people-quitting-jobs-record-numbers-companies-take-note-treat-them-better>.

² Salvanto, Anthony, Jennifer De Pinto and Fred Backus. June 14, 2021. Americans optimistic about job prospects, and many would keep working from home — CBS News poll. *CBS News*. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/americans-employment-work-from-home-opinion-poll>.

³ Bureau of Labor Statistics. June 4, 2021. The Employment Situation – May 2021. *Bureau of Labor Statistics*. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.nr0.htm>.

services is at its lowest level in more than fifty years, and funding for community college career and technical education has fallen 28% in the last twenty years alone.^{4, 5}

Now is the time to invest in American workers. High unemployment and historic turnover, combined with the tremendous economic energy of the post-COVID recovery, present an unparalleled opportunity to retrain and realign the American workforce for the new economy, while also providing American workers with the necessary skills to earn higher wages and attain long-term job security.

For these reasons, we urge congressional leadership to prioritize new spending for workforce development in the upcoming reconciliation package.

Specifically, we are calling for at least \$100 billion in new spending for workforce development programs, including:

- adult workforce training and dislocated worker programs;
- career and technical education and registered apprenticeships;
- youth career pipeline programs and re-entry employment opportunities; and
- the full spectrum of training and career pathway supportive services, including income support, counseling and case management.

We further encourage leadership to commit new spending specifically for building more effective partnerships between training providers and employers, including:

- subsidizing on-the-job training; and
- co-creating curricula with employers in in-demand industries, sectors and occupations.

These investments are crucial to both the post-COVID economic recovery and the long-term economic investments that are the focus of the reconciliation package, and yet, these crucial investments have been neglected in the previous three relief packages.

The American worker is counting on us—now is the time to invest in our shared future.

Sincerely,



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Steven Horsford
Member of Congress

⁴ Cielinski, Anna. December 2017. Federal Investment in Employment and Job Training Services Has Declined Over the Last 40 Years. *The Center for Law and Social Policy*.
<https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/publications/2017/12/12.15.17%20Federal%20Investment%20in%20Employment%20and%20Job%20Training.pdf>.

⁵ National Skills Coalition. March 2019. Funding Cuts Factsheet. *National Skills Coalition*.
<https://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Funding-Cuts-Fact-Sheet-March2019.pdf>.

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