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. 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.

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

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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

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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.  

/S/  ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON  
Member of Congress

/S/  LUCY MCBATH  
Member of Congress

/S/  JOAQUIN CASTRO  
Member of Congress

/S/  CINDY AXNE  
Member of Congress

/S/  MARK TAKANO  
Member of Congress

/S/  HENRY C. “HANK” JOHNSON, JR.  
Member of Congress

/S/  BARBARA LEE  
Member of Congress

/S/  DONALD M. PAYNE, JR.  
Member of Congress

/S/  ANTHONY G. BROWN  
Member of Congress

/S/  AYANNA PRESSLEY  
Member of Congress

/S/  THOMAS R. SUOZZI  
Member of Congress

/S/  DAVID N. CICILLINE  
Member of Congress

/S/  MIKE DOYLE  
Member of Congress

/S/  LISA BLUNT ROCHESTER  
Member of Congress

/S/  MARK POCAN  
Member of Congress

/S/  DANNY K. DAVIS  
Member of Congress

/S/  DWIGHT EVANS  
Member of Congress

/S/  JAMES R. LANGEVIN  
Member of Congress

/S/  SARA JACOBS  
Member of Congress

/S/  MONDAIRE JONES  
Member of Congress
/S/ SUSAN WILD  
Member of Congress

/ S/  
BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN  
Member of Congress

/ S/  
CONOR LAMB  
Member of Congress

/ S/  
LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ  
Member of Congress

/ S/  
NIKEMA WILLIAMS  
Member of Congress

/ S/  
DEBBIE DINGELL  
Member of Congress

/ S/  
FREDERICA S. WILSON  
Member of Congress

/ S/  
JOSEPH D. MORELLE  
Member of Congress

/ S/  
STACEY E. PLASKETT  
Member of Congress

/ S/  
LORI TRAHA N  
Member of Congress

/ S/  
JOSH HARDER  
Member of Congress

/ S/  
DINA TITUS  
Member of Congress

/ S/  
ANDY LEVIN  
Member of Congress

/ S/  
JASON CROW  
Member of Congress

/ S/  
ANGIE CRAIG  
Member of Congress

/ S/  
TONY CÁRDENAS  
Member of Congress

/ S/  
TERRI A. SEWELL  
Member of Congress

/ S/  
FRANK MRVAN  
Member of Congress

/ S/  
AL LAWSON  
Member of Congress

/ S/  
SCOTT PETERS  
Member of Congress
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Member of Congress

MARILYN STRICKLAND
Member of Congress

JOHN P. SARBAKES
Member of Congress

PETER WELCH
Member of Congress

TIM RYAN
Member of Congress

JAHANA HAYES
Member of Congress

ALMA S. ADAMS, PHD
Member of Congress

PETER DEFAZIO
Member of Congress

RICK LARSEN
Member of Congress

MARIE NEWMAN
Member of Congress

JERRY MCNERNEY
Member of Congress

SETH MOULTON
Member of Congress

MIKE LEVIN
Member of Congress

CHARLIE CRIST
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

JOE NEGUSE
Member of Congress

VICENTE GONZALEZ
Member of Congress

DARREN SOTO
Member of Congress

TROY A. CARTER, SR.
Member of Congress

EMANUEL CLEAVER, II
Member of Congress
CAROLYN B. MALONEY
Member of Congress

ED PERLMUTTER
Member of Congress

HENRY CUELLAR
Member of Congress

JENNIFER WEXTON
Member of Congress

NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ
Member of Congress

PAUL TONKO
Member of Congress

ERIC SWALWELL
Member of Congress

JERROLD NADLER
Member of Congress

HALEY STEVENS
Member of Congress

STEVE COHEN
Member of Congress

MIKE THOMPSON
Member of Congress

JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY
Member of Congress

SEAN CASTEN
Member of Congress

DANIEL T. KILDEE
Member of Congress

JARED HUFFMAN
Member of Congress

GWEN MOORE
Member of Congress

JOHN B. LARSON
Member of Congress

BILL PASCRELL, JR.
Member of Congress

SHEILA JACKSON LEE
Member of Congress

JIMMY GOMEZ
Member of Congress
/S/ LAUREN UNDERWOOD
Member of Congress

/S/ ZOE LOFGREN
Member of Congress

/S/ SUZANNE BONAMICI
Member of Congress

/S/ ANTONIO DELGADO
Member of Congress

/S/ RAÚL GRIJALVA
Member of Congress

/S/ MARK DESAULNIER
Member of Congress

/S/ BRIAN HIGGINS
Member of Congress

/S/ NORMA J. TORRES
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/S/ ALBIO B. SIRES
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

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/S/ JOE COURTNEY
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Member of Congress

/S/ ANDY KIM
Member of Congress

/S/ TED LIEU
Member of Congress

/S/ G.K. BUTTERFIELD
Member of Congress

S/ JOSH GOTTHEIMER
Member of Congress