

## The AMERICA Works Act

### Background

- The U.S. needs a strong technical workforce. Employers rely on the right workers, with the right skills, at the right time to drive innovation, increase productivity, and remain globally competitive. Workers need the right skills to access employment and advancement opportunities.
- The solution for workers and employers is nationally portable, industry-recognized skills credentials. These become postsecondary educational credentials with real value in the workplace. For students and workers in training, they are educational “targets” that lead efficiently toward real preparation for jobs and life.
- There are industry-recognized skills certifications for multiple sectors of our economy, e.g., health care, construction, energy.
- Most recently, industry leaders across the manufacturing economy have endorsed a set of “stackable” credentials verifying the core or basic personal effectiveness skills, foundational academic skills, general workplace skills, and cross-cutting manufacturing skills necessary for individuals to succeed in virtually all entry-level jobs in manufacturing.
- These nationally portable, industry-recognized skills certifications are grounded on the Advanced Manufacturing Competency Model developed by the manufacturing industry and the U.S. Department of Labor.
- The Federal Government invests billions of dollars each year in workforce training programs, with limited impact. Directing priority to education and training that results in nationally portable, industry-recognized credentials will be good for workers, and good for the economy.
- For young people preparing for their first job, industry-recognized credentials validate they are ready for entry-level jobs across the industry. For transitioning workers, industry-recognized credentials can assess the level of skills already obtained, focus training on filling skills gaps, and help workers transition quickly to new jobs. For separating military personnel, skills gained in their MOS training can be assessed and supplemented for new civilian jobs.
- It brings local manufacturers in closer contact with local training programs and builds the credibility of publicly funded training programs with employers all over the country.

### Drafted Legislation

- AMERICA Works Act directs use of public funds for designated programs in the Carl D. Perkins Vocational–Technical Education Act (Perkins), Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) and Workforce Investment Act (WIA) to develop necessary skills.
  - It amends the Training Activities and Youth Activities sections of WIA to give priority to training programs resulting in nationally portable, industry-recognized credentials.

- It amends Perkins by assuring programs of study that receive federal funds result in nationally portable, industry-recognized credentials within the Career and Technical Education section of the bill.
- It adds a provision to improve training programs under TAA, established by the Trade Act of 1974, directing the Secretary of Labor to approve programs that provide a nationally portable, industry-recognized credential.

### **Similar Legislation**

- The Higher Ed bill (Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act 'SAFRA') recognized how important industry-recognized credentials are to improving the relevance and impact from higher ed. Sections of this legislation were included in the final bill to expand access to these critically important programs.
- The inclusion of these provisions in SAFRA helps to illustrate how important it is to ensure the taxpayer-funded workforce development and job training programs achieve the same result, for workers and employers.