March 31, 2017

The Honorable Thad Cochran Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patrick Leahy Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cochran, Ranking Member Leahy, Chairman Frelinghuysen, and Ranking Member Lowey:

On behalf of The U.S. Conference of Mayors, as you consider federal investments in the nation’s workforce programs at the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies hearing on “Examining Federal Support for Job Training Programs,” we urge you to fully invest in the nation’s workers and businesses, to close the skills gap and ensure that American employers have the skilled labor necessary to compete in today’s rapidly changing economy.

As an organization, the U.S. Conference of Mayors represents 1,408 communities throughout America. From small to large cities, and suburban to rural communities, the nation’s business owners and employees expect their elected leaders to focus on their priorities and support programs and policies that secure the future of their families.

Accordingly, we urge you to ensure that key education and workforce programs --including but not limited to those authorized in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Carl D. Perkins Act, the Higher Education Act, and the Older Americans Act -- are fully funded to help Americans gain family-supporting jobs.
One of the most important priorities, and biggest obstacles, to our future growth is finding, training and retaining a skilled workforce. In 2014, Congress made WIOA a bipartisan priority – a near unanimous passage in both houses of Congress with agreed upon funding levels for enough resources so the spirit of the bill could be achieved in practice. The legislation is critical for the millions of Americans who are looking for work and for the employers who have millions of job opportunities that remain unfilled due to the skills gap.

According to data sourced from the Department of Labor for Program Year ending June, 2016, the return on investment from federal taxes and wages and savings on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding for every $1 in public funding spent on Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth funding is nearly two-fold.¹ Full funding of WIOA programs is a good investment in American workers and strengthens our economy.

As you work to complete the Fiscal Year 2017 appropriations process, and move to Fiscal Year 2018 appropriations, the nation’s mayors urge you to maintain parity between defense and non-defense spending levels, and recommend adequate funding for America’s workforce programs. In order for the United States to continue in its role as a global economic leader, all related programs should be funded at least at the authorized levels set by Congress.

Sincerely,

Mick Cornett
President, The U.S. Conference of Mayors
Mayor of Oklahoma City

¹ Data from FutureWork, at futureworksystems.com. Data is sourced from Department of Labor for Program Year ending June, 2016.