

March 2017



IMPORTANT MESSAGE REGARDING SKILLED LABOR FOR OUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

from The Wood Products Manufacturing Industry

Dear Legislator:

On behalf of twelve trade associations representing **wood products manufacturing**, we would like to call your attention to the importance of supporting legislation that will reauthorize and increase funding for the *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006* (CTE), the long-standing funding source that is the backbone of the skilled trades courses in our schools. The *CTE Act* is sorely needed to close the “skills gap” and infuse American industry with the necessary talent to succeed in the coming decades. **It is essential that Congress continue to work towards support of a new generation of skilled workers --as thousands of Baby Boomers retire – to grow job opportunities for non-college bound students in America.**

The role that manufacturing and skilled labor jobs play in supporting economic development cannot be overstated. In fact, manufacturing is the largest industry in the United States¹, accounting for 12 percent of the Gross Domestic Product.² Giving students the opportunity to add **skill-based courses** to their education is a WIN-WIN in preparing them for jobs and supplying **American** companies that have a shortage of skilled tradesmen with the new talent they so desperately need. According to current projections, 3.5 million manufacturing and skilled-trade jobs will need to be filled by the year 2025.³ We cannot have a robust American workforce – one that will contribute to the success of this administration’s goal of rebuilding infra-structure -- if we do not create the pipeline of skilled workers. As this segment of our economy evolves, even employed workers may need new training that they can acquire at community colleges offering modern-day skills classes.

Manufacturing and skilled trades jobs have distinctly changed significantly over the past century. Today, it is a vibrant, modern, advanced and computerized industry with increased automation, robotics, material handling, better supply chain management and numerous efficiency improvements that still require human ingenuity and hands-on skills. In fact, 42 percent of these jobs will require some form of post-secondary education by the year 2018.⁴ Careers in these fields are diverse and there are many vacancies and job opportunities. As the field continues to diversify and expand, industry-related certifications will continue to be a vital component to this sector. The wood products industry is working hard to “educate the educators” and the public in understanding this whole new level of product development and production.

¹ Carnevale, A. P., Smith, N., & Strohl, J. (2013). *Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirements Through 2020*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.

² National Association of Manufacturers. (n.d.). *Facts About Manufacturing*. Retrieved from <http://www.nam.org/Newsroom/FactsAbout-Manufacturing>.

³ Carnevale, A. P., Smith, N., & Strohl, J. (2013). *Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirements Through 2020*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce; Deloitte and The Manufacturing Institute. (2015). *The skills gap in U.S. manufacturing: 2015 and beyond*. Retrieved from <http://www.themanufacturinginstitute.org/~media/827DBC76533942679A15EF7067A704CD.ashx>.

⁴ Carnevale, A. P., Smith, N., Stone III, J. R., Kotamraju, P., Steuernagel, B., & Green, K. A. (2011). *Career Clusters: Forecasting Demand for High School Through College Jobs*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce

Many educational institutions are now working tirelessly to re-institute updated CTE programs and their necessary infrastructure so that they can do their part in addressing the skilled worker shortage. Roughly 70 percent of manufacturing executives report lack of a workforce with the necessary computer and technical skills⁵, which by virtue, only impedes economic growth. At the same time, an invigorating nationwide “maker movement” continues to gain momentum, enticing young people and those in need of new skills to take another look at the innovation, design and production of American-made products. All this good effort must have the support of our government in order to keep moving forward in revitalizing the American economy.

The membership of these various trade groups represents well over 5000 member companies working in all fifty states, with thousands of workers in companies of all sizes. Many are located in rural communities. These businesses include cabinet, millwork, floor and furniture manufacturers, as well as various wood product, machinery, component, fixture, suppliers, distributors and other related businesses -- essentially responsible for creating everything that contributes to well-functioning, comfortable and innovatively-designed interior environments. On behalf of this important industry segment, we thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Brett Miller, Vice President of Education & Certification
National Wood Flooring Association (NWFA)

Association of Woodworking & Furnishings Suppliers (AWFS)
Architectural Woodwork Institute (AWI)
Composite Panel Association (CPA)
Hardwood Federation
Hardwood Manufacturers Association (HMA)
No. American Building Materials Distribution Association (NBMDA)
Wood Components Manufacturers Assoc. (WCMA)
Wood Products Manufacturers Association (WPMA)
Woodwork Career Alliance (WCA)
Woodworking Machinery Industry Association (WMIA)
Woodworking Machinery Manufacturers Association (WMMA)

⁵ Deloitte and The Manufacturing Institute. (2015). The skills gap in U.S. manufacturing: 2015 and beyond. Retrieved from <http://www.themanufacturinginstitute.org/~ / media/827DBC76533942679A15EF7067A704CD.ashx>