



AMERICA'S CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS



ESTABLISHED 1971

May 8, 2012

OFFICERS

Emanuel Cleaver II
Chairman

Donna Christensen
First Vice Chair

G.K. Butterfield
Second Vice Chair

Yvette D. Clarke
Secretary

André Carson
Whip

The Honorable John Kline
Chairman
House Committee on Education and
Workforce
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chairman
Subcommittee on Higher Education
and Workforce Training
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable George Miller
Ranking Member
House Committee on Education and
Workforce
2101 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rubén Hinojosa
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Higher Education
and Workforce Training
2101 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

MEMBERS

- John Conyers, Jr., MI - '65
- Charles B. Rangel, NY - '71
- Edolphus Towns, NY - '83
- John Lewis, GA - '87
- Donald M. Payne, NJ - '89
- Eleanor Holmes Norton, DC - '91
- Maxine Waters, CA - '91
- Sanford D. Bishop, Jr., GA - '93
- Corrine Brown, FL - '93
- James E. Clyburn, SC - '93
- Alece L. Hastings, FL - '93
- Eddie Bernice Johnson, TX - '93
- Bobby L. Rush, IL - '93
- Robert C. "Bobby" Scott, VA - '93
- Melvin L. Watt, NC - '93
- Bennie G. Thompson, MS - '93
- Chaka Fattah, PA - '95
- Sheila Jackson Lee, TX - '95
- Jesse L. Jackson, Jr., IL - '95
- Elijah E. Cummings, MD - '96
- Donna M. Christensen, VI - '97
- Danny K. Davis, IL - '97
- Gregory W. Meeks, NY - '98
- Barbara Lee, CA - '98
- William Lacy Clay, Jr., MO - '01
- David Scott, GA - '03
- G.K. Butterfield, Jr., NC - '04
- Emanuel Cleaver II, MO - '05
- Al Green, TX - '05
- Gwen Moore, WI - '05
- Yvette D. Clarke, NY - '07
- Keith Ellison, MN - '07
- Hank Johnson, GA - '07
- Laura Richardson, CA - '07
- André Carson, IN - '08
- Donna F. Edwards, MD - '08
- Marcia L. Fudge, OH - '08
- Karen Bass, CA - '11
- Hansen Clarke, MI - '11
- Cedric Richmond, LA - '11
- Terri Sewell, AL - '11
- Allen West, FL - '11
- Frederica Wilson, FL - '11

Dear Chairman Kline, Ranking Member Miller, Chairwoman Foxx, and Ranking Member Hinojosa:

As Members of the Congressional Black Caucus, we write to respectfully voice our opposition to H.R. 4297, the *Workforce Investment Improvement Act of 2012*.

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) established a national workforce preparation and employment system to meet the needs of businesses, job seekers and those who want to further their careers. The Act reformed federal employment, training, adult education, and vocational rehabilitation programs by creating an integrated one-stop system of workforce investment and education services for adults, dislocated workers, and youth. Reauthorization is long overdue, and the 112th Congress now has the opportunity to implement a more comprehensive vision by promoting strategic investment and greater synergy among key federal labor market policies and programs. Although we support reauthorization of this important piece of legislation, we cannot support H.R. 4297 in its current form given that it severely weakens both the public workforce investment system's ability to provide equitable access to services for those most in need and the effectiveness of the adult education system.

We are particularly concerned that the proposed legislation will curtail training for low-income populations and individuals facing barriers to employment. As the United States economy is undergoing a major transformation, a new vision for workforce policy is essential to create greater economic opportunities for all workers. We must ensure that all Americans have access to the workforce and can obtain the education, training, and skills that lead to economic security. Unfortunately, great challenges exist. Each year approximately 1.2 million students fail to graduate from high school. This is an average of 1 student every 9 seconds. Additionally, many of these drop outs will never earn any type of high school credential. It is our belief that we must not leave these at-risk youth behind and that *Workforce Investment Act* should maintain targeted programs to increasing their prospects for long-term employment. This approach represents both a moral



*Members are listed
in order of seniority*

imperative and commonsense strategy for a nation that needs a skilled workforce to compete in the global marketplace. Reengaging disconnected youth, who are not presently on a pathway to academic or career success, not only benefits the individual in terms of higher earnings, but benefits society.

Further, we cannot support the broad and sweeping consolidation of programs that target specific populations into a single, amorphous block grant intended to serve all job seekers. In 1998, when WIA was created, the unemployment rate was under 5 percent. With a current unemployment of over 8 percent, we must ensure that WIA includes even more targeted resources that can address the root causes of a sustained high unemployment rate. Consolidation is not tantamount to reform; simply combining funding streams will not improve the effectiveness or efficiency of the workforce system. The proposed consolidation fails to improve the system and actually threatens to leave many already-marginalized groups further behind. While we strongly believe in enhanced coordination across the multiple *Workforce Investment Act* programs, we believe that specific programs targeting the unique needs of certain job seekers, such as Veterans, women, and Older Americans, are necessary to ensure that these populations are adequately served.

Another cause for concern is the increase in the business majority requirements for Workforce Investment Boards. H.R. 4297 eliminates the requirement that state and local Workforce Investment Boards include youth and community based organizations, community colleges and labor unions. In its stead, the bill requires employers to make up a two-thirds majority. This will not only silence the stakeholders who have a direct impact on the success of the *Workforce Investment Act* and its participants, it will give private companies more power to decide how to use public funds. Members of the community must be included to ensure the *Workforce Investment Act* operates to serve the people it was intended. Although, employers are necessary components, they should not comprise an overwhelming majority on state and local Workforce Investment Boards. The required partners, as prescribed in the original bill, must be included to help guarantee success and maintain the efficacy of the *Workforce Investment Act*.

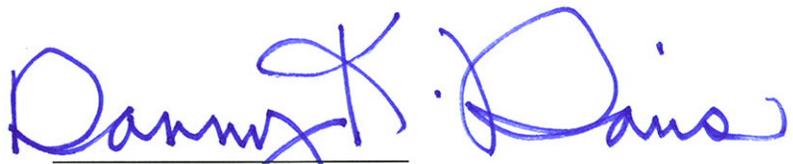
In addition, Title II, *the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of 1998*, must be strengthened. Title II was designed to assist adults to become literate, obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency, and help in the completion of a secondary school education. Nationwide, there are approximately 93 million adults with low literacy levels and 26 million adults without a high school credential. Title II programs currently lack the funding and the capacity to serve this population. Of those who do enroll, only a few advance their skills and transition to postsecondary credentialing. The reauthorization of WIA must address the need for Adult Basic Education programs to provide clear pathways to post secondary credentials and career advancement by including work-related content and integrated education opportunities. It must strive to increase English language proficiency to better assimilate English language learners into the workforce and establish new performance measures to ensure accountability is focused on measurable, objective, evidence-based indicators. These changes are paramount and necessary to the success of the reauthorization of WIA.

Our workers, businesses, and communities need Congressional action to strengthen the *Workforce Investment Act* by improving training for workers of all ages and abilities. Businesses require skilled American workers to compete on the international stage, and unemployed Americans need training and education to fulfill the industry needs. We hope that that we can work together to reauthorize WIA so that it can best serve the needs of all American workers and businesses.

Sincerely,

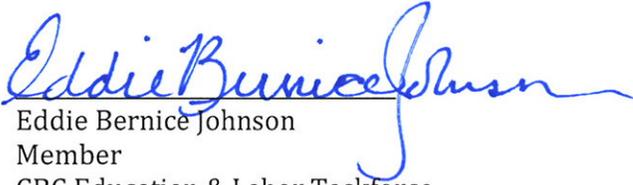


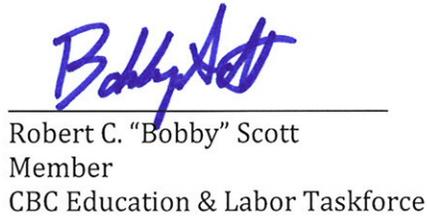
Emanuel Cleaver
Chair
Congressional Black Caucus

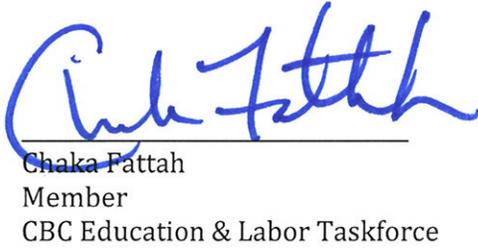


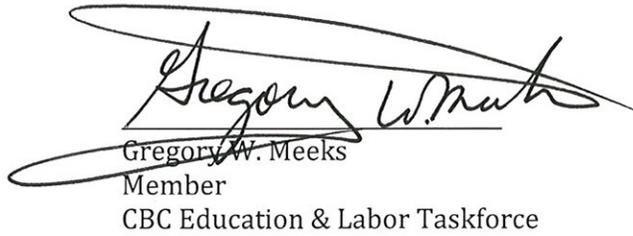
Danny K. Davis
Chair
CBC Education and Labor Taskforce

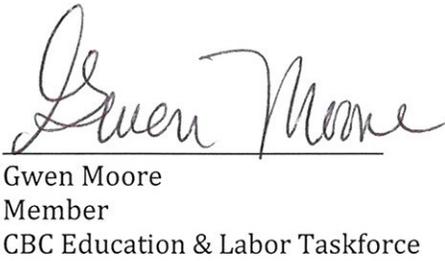



Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member
CBC Education & Labor Taskforce


Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member
CBC Education & Labor Taskforce

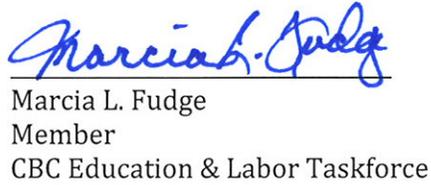

Chaka Fattah
Member
CBC Education & Labor Taskforce

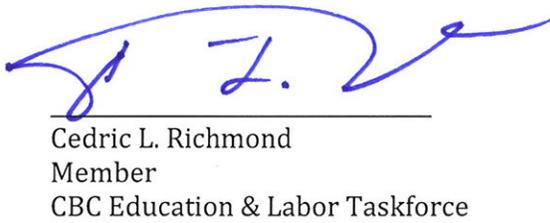

Gregory W. Meeks
Member
CBC Education & Labor Taskforce

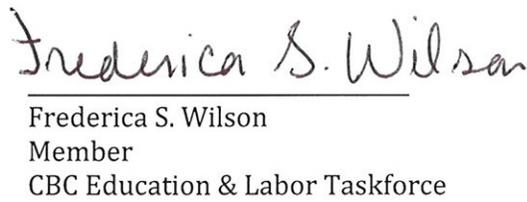

Gwen Moore
Member
CBC Education & Labor Taskforce


Yvette D. Clarke
Member
CBC Education & Labor Taskforce


Laura Richardson
Member
CBC Education & Labor Taskforce


Marcia L. Fudge
Member
CBC Education & Labor Taskforce


Cedric L. Richmond
Member
CBC Education & Labor Taskforce


Frederica S. Wilson
Member
CBC Education & Labor Taskforce

