



Career and technical education (CTE) equips students with the skills, confidence and real-world experiences they need to succeed in today's rapidly changing economy. Whether they are just beginning their educational journey or returning to the classroom to re-skill or upskill, CTE learners are preparing for the jobs that power our communities and strengthen our future. These legislative recommendations reflect SkillsUSA's commitment to expanding CTE access, modernizing systems and ensuring every student can thrive through high-quality CTE programming that not only prepares them for the future of work, but helps to shape it.

1 Invest in the Nation's CTE Infrastructure

CTE equips students with the skills they need to power America's industries. The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Act's (Perkins V) Basic State Grant program is the cornerstone of federal support for CTE, yet current funding levels remain well below what is needed to meet current needs and growing demand. Additional funding for CTE is needed to support students in realizing their full potential, especially as the economy continues to undergo rapid transformation.

SKILLSUSA URGES CONGRESS TO:

- Increase funding for Perkins V's Basic State Grant program to support hands-on training, work-based learning and credential attainment.
- Strengthen federal funding to support CTE systems and programs that help connect learners with opportunities in dynamic and growing sectors of the American economy, especially efforts that intentionally support diverse geographic areas throughout the nation.
- Invest in innovative CTE programs, strategies and approaches that supplement these foundational investments in CTE, particularly efforts that equip students with the skills and knowledge they need to be successful in an economy rapidly changing due to artificial intelligence and wider technological advancements.

2 Protect and Support the Role of CTE in Public Education

CTE is a core component of the public education experience. High school and postsecondary students across the country rely on access to strong CTE programs and pathways to gain real-world skills and career direction. Too often, public schools and institutions are the only locations where CTE programs are offered at scale to meet current and future workforce needs.

SKILLSUSA URGES CONGRESS TO:

- Maintain a strong commitment to public education systems that offer CTE as a central part of the student experience.
- Oppose efforts to divert funds away from the schools and institutions that deliver high-quality, skill-based education to American students.
- Ensure that dedicated federal CTE investments — like Perkins V state grant funding — remain targeted to public education systems and are not diluted by competing priorities or redirected to non-public entities.



3 Improve Postsecondary CTE Access

The value proposition for higher education is changing. Today's students are more likely to pursue postsecondary education not just for a degree, but to gain specific skills and credentials that lead to good jobs and higher wages — often in a shorter time frame. Many of today's postsecondary learners are older or may already be working, meaning they increasingly rely on shorter-term, high-quality CTE programs to quickly advance their careers. Yet, outdated federal policy prevents these students from using Pell Grants to access the very programs designed to meet their needs.

SKILLSUSA URGES CONGRESS TO:

- Expand federal Pell Grant program eligibility for high-quality, shorter-term CTE programs aligned with the needs of the American economy.
- Ensure newly eligible programs under this policy change lead to *credentials of value* that provide further postsecondary and employment opportunities for students.
- Provide dedicated funding for open access postsecondary institutions — such as community and technical colleges and area technical centers — to offer CTE programming aligned with the needs of the economy, such as the Strengthening Community College Training Grant Program.

4 Strengthen CTE's Connection to Workforce Development Systems

As Congress considers updates to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the National Apprenticeship Act (NAA), CTE and Perkins V must be recognized as a key partner in building America's talent pipeline.

SKILLSUSA URGES CONGRESS TO:

- Promote legislation that supports alignment and coordination between Perkins and WIOA, including policies that ensure CTE representation within WIOA and that meaningfully share related infrastructure responsibilities.
- Improve access to supportive services that help students and workers succeed, and provide flexibility to braid workforce funding streams in ways that help to coordinate efforts across education, workforce and human services systems.
- Establish consistent standards and definitions for youth apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships and registered apprenticeship programs, including proposals that clarify the relationship between CTE and these programs.

5 Grow the Pipeline of Skilled CTE Instructors

Knowledgeable instructors with real-world experience are an essential ingredient for high-quality CTE programs. Yet, many schools struggle to recruit and retain qualified educators due to lower salaries and industry competition.

SKILLSUSA URGES CONGRESS TO:

- Support policies that make teaching a competitive and attractive option for skilled trades professionals.
- Expand access to CTE-specific teacher training and professional development.
- Encourage state licensure reciprocity to increase instructor mobility.



WHY IT MATTERS: A SkillsUSA Commitment

These legislative priorities reflect our commitment to preparing students for the careers that keep America running. Whether they're learning to weld, code, repair engines or lead teams — our students are building the future. Federal policy helps open doors for every learner so that they are ready to lead, create and contribute through CTE.

Learn more at www.skillsusa.org.