

June 7, 2019

Senate Education Committee

Senate of Pennsylvania

Re: House Bill 522

Dear Senator,

On behalf of the 4,500 elected officials who govern the commonwealth’s public school districts **we are writing to request your support for House Bill 522**, to be considered by the Senate Education Committee on Tuesday, June 11, 2019.

**House Bill 522**, sponsored by Rep. Mike Tobash, would establish a career and technical education investment incentive tax credit program intended to increase the enrollment of students in career and technology education (CTE) programs and to provide additional funding for the costs associated with offering CTE programs.

CTE programs are an essential part of Pennsylvania’s workforce and economic future. According to the 22 local Workforce Development Boards in the commonwealth, there are projected to be 56,000 annual openings for high priority occupations (HPOs) in areas such as nursing assistants, machine tool operators, and electricians over the next several years. CTE schools are a vital part in helping to meet these workforce demands by preparing their students to enter HPOs directly upon graduation or to continue their educations.

Prior to the 2018-19 state budget, the CTE line item had not been increased in a decade. As a result, CTE schools have been unable to replace outdated equipment and machinery, expand successful programs, and create new programs which would benefit their local labor markets. In the recent [State of Education](https://www.psba.org/2019/02/2019-state-of-education-report-now-online/) survey, 63% of CTE chief school administrators reported that the biggest challenge facing CTE schools was budget pressure and lack of funding. As a result of those budget pressures, nearly 35 % of CTE schools said that they planned to make reductions in the equipment and supplies provided to faculty and students; 13% said they planned to reduce the number of programs or services provided in their schools.

In the 2016-17 school year, 67,300 students were enrolled in a CTE program, but that number could be, and if Pennsylvania is to meet its workforce needs, must be higher. In that same survey of CTE chief school administrators, the biggest challenges in attracting students to CTE programs were the perception of CTE schools and students/parents not being aware of the opportunities available.

Funding made available through the proposed tax credits would be very useful to CTE schools. This much needed funding could be used to allow CTE schools to keep up with equipment and technology innovations, promote greater cooperation between CTE schools and local businesses, help overcome any stigma involved in enrolling in CTE programs, create more seats in the most popular programs, and ensure parents and students are aware of the opportunities available to them other than the four-year traditional college-prep programs.

Employers in Pennsylvania need to be linked with employees who have the skills needed to get the job done.  Our CTC schools create the skilled workers that meet the needs of businesses in Pennsylvania.  House Bill 522 supports our students who attend CTC schools and fosters a connection between the businesses who need skilled workers and the students who need the jobs of the future.

We are happy to support this legislation and look forward to continuing to work with this committee on this and other important issues affecting public education this session. We appreciate your time and attention to this matter.