

June 4, 2014



Thank you for
your leadership on
this issue!

Representative John Kline
VIA Fax: (202) 225-2595

Dear Representative Kline,

I am writing on behalf of the Minnesota Workforce Council Association (MWCA) membership to **endorse the recently introduced H.R. 803, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).**

MWCA represents the collective interests of the Chief Local Elected Officials (LEOs), Workforce Investment Board (WIB) Leadership, and Title IB (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Program) service providers across Minnesota's sixteen workforce service areas. It is the mission of the MWCA to provide Minnesota with a skilled and competitive workforce through engaged and proactive local elected officials, workforce boards, and staff.

Minnesota is in the midst of an economic expansion, having now recovered all of the jobs lost in the great recession. As employers are hiring full time workers, they often report the available applicant pool is skill deficient, given the increase in technical, skilled jobs. And, certain demographics are having less success at gaining and retaining employment; a particularly troublesome issue is that Minnesota has the second highest racial disparities employment in the nation.

In Minnesota, WIA has made a real difference for jobseeker and employers. We consistently rank among the top in the nation in achieving performance measures and are constantly working with our state agencies to identify areas of opportunity for improvement. Now more than ever, the state needs strong Workforce Investment Boards and a coordinated and responsive workforce development system. **We are excited that WIOA demonstrates a bipartisan, bicameral reinvigorated interest from Congress.**

For some time, MWCA has had an outline of WIA Reauthorization Priorities, including:

- support for strong leadership roles for local elected officials and local, business-led workforce investment boards as a core element of a federal workforce investment system;
- support for local designation of workforce service areas, which address the needs of community employers and jobseekers; and
- support for a system which provides strong universal services to all jobseekers, and streamlines specialized services to economically disadvantaged youth and adults.

H.R. 803 embraces these components, while **encouraging new and innovative strategies** to address critical employer needs through an increased focus on labor market analysis and stronger collaboration with economic development, education and community partners. Furthermore, common performance measures, flexibility among funding streams, regional planning efforts and an emphasis on career pathways are aligned with the strategies we have found most successful in our local communities.

All workforce development initiatives that have passed in the past 40 years have been accomplished with strong bipartisan collaboration. **MWCA urges the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act as soon as possible, with your strong support.**

Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns regarding how this important legislation would impact your employers and jobseekers.

Sincerely,

Cathy Weik
Chair, Minnesota Workforce Council Association