

Workforce

DEVELOPMENT, INC.

Working together to strengthen our future

June 5, 2014

United States Representative John Kline
2439 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20515-2302

Dear Representative Kline:

I am writing on behalf of the southeastern Minnesota Workforce Investment Board (Workforce Development, Inc.) to **endorse the recently introduced H.R. 803, the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA).**

Workforce Development, Inc. represents the collective interests of private industry, service providers and the Joint Powers Board of Chief Local Elected Officials (LEOs) of the 10 counties in southeastern Minnesota. It is our stated mission to develop and advance our workforce.

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. Also, certain demographics are having less success at gaining and retaining employment – a fact that is masked by decreasing unemployment figures. We need a modernized version of our workforce development legislation that allows us the **flexibility and responsiveness** needed to address our ever-changing local training needs.

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. **We are excited that WIOA demonstrates a bipartisan, bicameral reinvigorated interest from Congress.**

For the past decade we have been an active supporter 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 bi-partisan support. **Workforce Development, Inc. urges the passage of the Workforce Investment 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,



Jeff Custer
President, Workforce Development, Inc.

