

Dear Ms. Weinberger:

Thank you for taking the time to contact me about adult education in the wake of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. I appreciate hearing from you about this issue.

I believe that anyone with the drive, fortitude and desire to pursue the opportunities afforded by postsecondary education should be able to realize that dream, regardless of their personal financial situation. Increasingly, a postsecondary education is required to obtain jobs that meet middle-class economic needs. However, data from the U.S. Census shows that 14 percent of adults over the age of 25 have less than a high school diploma.

I strongly believe that adult educational programs should be accessible and affordable for all, and I am involved in several efforts to ensure that Pennsylvanians can benefit from continuing education for adults. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which I voted to reauthorize in 2014, made key adjustments to a variety of adult education programs. These changes were made with job training and postsecondary education in mind. During this reauthorization, efforts were also made to enable adult students to access professional development and technical training programs. At the same time, we need to fund these programs to ensure that we are investing in adult education and training programs. Investing in adult education is crucial to the United States remaining globally competitive.

Additionally, in the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress, I was proud to lead a bipartisan effort in the Senate to reauthorize the Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE) Act. This program provides federal funding and support for high-quality CTE programs. These programs provide 12 million students nationwide with the training and education necessary for success in high-wage, high-skill and high-demand career fields such as engineering, information technology and health care. This education is critical in preparing our Pennsylvanians for success in the 21st century economy, which is why I was proud to sign on to a letter to the Committee on Appropriations, requesting robust funding for Perkins CTE in Fiscal Year 2021.

The novel coronavirus has disrupted our Nation's adult education and workforce development programs. In order to ensure the safety of our adult learners and educators and slow the spread of COVID-19, many programs across Pennsylvania and the country have closed indefinitely or moved to remote instruction. I have heard from many Pennsylvania educators about the unprecedented challenges they face in providing continuing education to adults, including a lack of reliable access to technology and broadband to engage in distance learning. I have also heard how closures, which have the effect of producing fewer skilled workers, may have a negative impact on meeting increased demands for manufacturing medical and emergency supplies. As our Nation continues to respond to the pandemic, we must work to minimize economic disruptions and continue to prepare students for a post-pandemic workforce.

On March 25, 2020, the United States Senate passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to provide to provide a health care response and emergency relief for individuals, families, schools and businesses affected by the coronavirus pandemic. The CARES Act included \$30.750 billion for an Education Stabilization Fund for states, school districts and institutions of higher education to address disruptions caused by the pandemic. Funding can be

used to plan for long-term closures, sanitize schools, purchase educational technology, provide mental health supports, as well as for other activities authorized by the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act and the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2018. The bill also provides \$3 billion to states to provide emergency grants to local education agencies and public institutions of higher education which have been most affected by COVID-19.

On April 20, 2020, I joined my colleagues in sending a letter to Senate leadership requesting \$15.1 billion in funding for programs authorized by WIOA, including adult education and Layoff Aversion Funds, as well as funding for Perkins CTE, in any future COVID-19 relief package. Increased funding for these programs is critical to ensuring that our workforce is prepared to meet our Nation's growing economic health and safety demands during and after the pandemic.

Again, thank you for sharing your thoughts with me. Please do not hesitate to contact me in the future about this or any other matter of importance to you.

For more information on this or other issues, I encourage you to visit my website, <http://casey.senate.gov>. For more information on the novel coronavirus, I encourage you to visit <http://casey.senate.gov/coronavirus>. I hope you will find this online office a comprehensive resource to stay up-to-date on my work in Washington, request assistance from my office, or share with me your thoughts on the issues that matter most to you and to Pennsylvania.

Sincerely,  
Bob Casey  
United States Senator