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Consolidated and Reformed Workforce Development and Literacy Act (1976): Speech 15

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ISSUE: System Accountability

BACKGROUND: As we move the responsibility and delivery of training services to States and localities and in order to promote quality in a federally funded training program, a strong system of accountability needed to be developed to ensure that federal funds are used properly and in the right areas.

The Senate bill has a strong accountability system. States would be required to develop measurable goals and benchmarks and report to the federal government annually on their performance in reaching the goals. The Federal Government would be required to review that performance compared to model benchmarks established by the Federal government, benchmarks proposed by other States and determine if the State benchmarks are sufficient to meet the goals outlined by that State. States must report annually to the Federal government on their performance in reaching their goals and benchmarks. States that fail to meet their goals and benchmarks could receive up to 10% less money for up to three years.

The House accountability system is much weaker. Each state would identify its own performance standards and report them to the Labor and Education Departments. States that fail to meet their expected performance standards could be required to receive technical assistance from either Education or Labor. If poor performance by a State continues, a State could be required to take up to 5% less money the following year.

TALKING POINTS: If we are going to require States to do the job the Federal government has been doing for years (because States had historically done a poor job at training or didn't do anything), we must be sure Federal funds are being used properly and for the right reasons.

A strong accountability system ensures that a dislocated worker in Warwick, RI and a dislocated worker in Atlanta, Georgia receives comparable services.

A strong accountability system ensures that States will train those in real need of training and not just those that are easy to train.

Accountability

In order to promote quality in federally funded workforce development programs and ensure that federal funding meets its objectives, a coherent accountability system must be included in the bill. To accomplish this, the bill must:

Include authority for the Secretaries to review and approve state plans;

Include authority for the Secretaries to review and approve or negotiate with each state its state performance goals/benchmarks;

Require states to establish performance goals/benchmarks for local areas and local agencies, and report on the performance of local areas and agencies, as well as the aggregate outcomes for the states;

Require the Secretaries to provide national definitions and models for performance indicators;

Include tracking and reporting for population groups that are hardest to serve and most in need of services.

These provisions are necessary for a successful accountability system:

They Secretaries' review and approval of plans and goals will motivate states to set challenging levels and ensure that states set realistic goals.

State tracking and reporting of the performance of local agencies will encourage states and local agencies to use the information on performance to improve the quality of services and ensure that no local areas are left with very poor quality programs.

In order for the Secretaries and Congress to use the performance information to understand the progress of the workforce development system, the state data must be relatively compatible. Common definitions will facilitate compilation of information at the national level; national models will help states establish systems of performance indicators more efficiently.

Tracking and reporting performance for special populations allows local agencies to improve services to the hardest to serve and allows states and the Departments to ensure that the system provides quality service to the full range of individuals needing workforce education and training.