

September 8, 2016

The Honorable Paul Ryan  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Democratic Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

## **The Construction Industry Urges Strong Support for the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (H.R. 5587)**

Dear Speaker Ryan and Leader Pelosi:

The undersigned organizations, representing a broad cross section of construction contractor, supplier, and manufacturing organizations, urge you to swiftly pass and enact the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (H.R. 5587), bipartisan legislation that reforms, modernizes, and reauthorizes the Carl D. Perkins Act

By restoring near-term certainty to federal transportation programs and tax policy through passage of the FAST and PATH Acts in late 2015, Congress has set the stage for growth in construction, manufacturing, and business purchasing. However, as companies prepare to take advantage of new opportunities, they are confronted with a new challenge: a shortage of skilled technical workers.

A recent study sponsored by Associated Equipment Distributors (AED) provides a snapshot of how just one sector of the construction industry is being affected by the national skills gap. The report, which was prepared by researchers at the College of William & Mary, found that the equipment technician shortage is costing dealers approximately \$2.4 billion per year in lost revenue and economic opportunity and that the average job open rate for technical positions at construction equipment dealerships is more than three times the national average. Additionally, the study found that a lack of hard skills is the top reason technician positions are going unfilled, that high school, community college, and technical school curricula are not aligned with employer needs, and that the skills gap has hindered company growth and increased costs and inefficiencies.

The AED study also found that the technician shortage has made it difficult to meet customer demand in the varied industries equipment distributors serve (construction, mining, agriculture, energy, etc.), underscoring how a skills gap in one sector of the economy can affect several others.

By enacting H.R. 5587 and reinforcing CTE programs, educators and their partners in the business community can improve student outcomes and provide the skills required to be successful in the workforce (or continuing education). H.R. 5587 focuses on areas where improvements can be made to current law, building upon past successes and enhancing aspects of the long-overdue-for-reauthorization Carl D. Perkins Act in order to better serve both workers and employers. The bill will help:

- Align CTE programs to the needs of the regional, state and local labor markets.
- Support effective and meaningful collaboration between secondary and postsecondary institutions and employers.
- Increase student participation in work-based learning opportunities.
- Promote the use of industry recognized credentials and other recognized post-secondary credentials.

These improvements will more effectively spend federal dollars to help our nation's students acquire the skills that they need and employers in our industry are demanding.

Simply put, by making technical education a priority, Congress can help better prepare workers for well-paying careers, ensure that U.S. companies are able to seize new business opportunities and make the United States more competitive in the global economy. Businesses, schools and government officials must collectively commit to tackling the technical education crisis at all levels, and you can take a great step towards enabling that commitment by passing H.R. 5587.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to working with you in a bipartisan manner to seize this important opportunity.

Sincerely,

**American Concrete Pipe Association  
American Concrete Pressure Pipe Association  
American Rental Association  
American Road & Transportation Builders Association  
American Institute of Steel Construction  
American Supply Association  
Associated Equipment Distributors  
Association of Equipment Manufacturers  
Concrete Reinforcing Steel Institute  
Distribution Contractors Association  
Heating, Air-Conditioning & Refrigeration Distributors International  
National Asphalt Pavement Association  
National Groundwater Association  
National Ready Mixed Concrete Association  
National Roofing Contractors Association  
National Stone, Sand and Gravel Association  
National Utility Contractors Association  
Portland Cement Association  
Power and Communication Contractors Association**