Policy Brief – Workforce Development/Career & Technical Education

Congress should pass legislation to fund career and technical education (CTE) programs that provide a strong education pathway towards careers in manufacturing.

Background
As manufacturing in the U.S. continues to regain strength, employers in the printing and packaging sector face increasing challenges in finding qualified talent to fill open positions in its evolving industry. A study by Deloitte and The Manufacturing Institute reveals nearly 3.5 million manufacturing jobs will need to be filled over the next decade. However, because of anticipated economic expansion and the large number of expected retirements, current projections forecast nearly 2 million of those jobs will remain unfilled. These shortages have considerable business implications and will hold back future economic growth.* As the U.S. employment rate increases, such in-demand jobs are more at risk of sitting empty. In 2017, over 500 businesses, trade associations, and non-profits came together to urge Congress to make CTE funding and improved programming a top priority.

Industry Position
Demand-driven and experience-based education is a critical workforce need that can be addressed both by federal government funding and through public-private partnerships. Efforts to educate and advance the manufacturing workforce must include input from the business community to help develop strategies, programs, and curriculum that address skill and labor shortages.

Modern, quality, and relevant Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, supported by the Perkins Act, are an effective tool for improving student outcomes and to prepare students with the necessary academic, technical, and employability skills required for successful entry into the workforce.

Additionally, increasing student participation in work-based learning opportunities (aka, apprenticeships), along with more closely aligning CTE programs to local or regional workforce demands, is critical to ensuring students and workers are prepared for the challenges of a high-skilled, dynamic workplace.

115th Congress
In 2017, the House unanimously passed H.R. 2353 (Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act) to ensure our nation’s students have access to important educational opportunities that support a manufacturing talent pipeline by teaching the necessary skills to be successful in today’s manufacturing work environment. It is now time for the Senate to take swift, bipartisan action to reauthorize the Perkins CTE Act.

*Source: National Association of Manufacturers (2017)