



Statement on the Bipartisan, Bicameral WIOA Reauthorization Agreement

December 10, 2024

Last month, House Education and Workforce and Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee leadership announced that they reached a bipartisan, bicameral agreement to reauthorize the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

The National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC) was pleased to see that the agreement included several positive changes to the existing law that would benefit opportunity youth, young people who face barriers to school and work. These changes include:

- Renaming the out-of-school youth definition to “opportunity youth,” which includes youth experiencing homelessness or youth involved in the foster care system, regardless of school status;
- Allowing young people to self-attest to certain statuses so they can be served upon arriving at programs;
- Creating a \$65 million Youth Apprenticeship Readiness Grant program and providing mandatory funding for it;
- Requiring state and local workforce boards to produce an analysis of the opportunity youth population in the state and their needs; and
- Authorizing increased funding for the WIOA Title I Youth Program.

While the proposed authorization levels for the WIOA Title I Youth Program fall short of [NYEC's recommendations](#), we were encouraged by the strong bipartisan, bicameral agreement that the WIOA Title I Youth Program must be funded more than current funding levels, especially given that current appropriations proposals from the House of Representatives call to eliminate funding to the program. We know that in order for the goals of the reauthorization to be successful, the WIOA Title I Youth Program and the broader workforce system must be funded.

The agreement places a strong emphasis on skills development, including by mandating that local workforce development boards spend 40% of their WIOA Youth funds on work experience, with 12.5% of such funds going to pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs. Resources for pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs are important and can provide paths to high-quality jobs. When carrying out these provisions, NYEC hopes that providers ensure that the paths to these programs are clear for opportunity youth. The agreement also allows Governors to use up to 10% of their WIOA Youth dollars to establish a Critical Industry Skills Fund and/or an Industry or Sector Partnership and Career Pathways Development fund. NYEC's members, which include local and state workforce development boards, direct service providers, and state and local workforce agencies, are concerned that these provisions may make it difficult for local areas to achieve the skills development goals set in the agreement while also paying for the administration of services, supportive services, and other costs required to deliver high-quality skills development opportunities to young people.

NYEC and its members also know that bipartisan bills are often full of compromises – reflecting the differing perspectives of all of those part of the workforce system. We are encouraged by the fact



that Chair Virginia Foxx, Ranking Member Bobby Scott, Chair Bernie Sanders, and Ranking Member Bill Cassidy are taking a step in the right direction to make the public workforce system work better for opportunity youth and the programs that serve them.

“Assessing the current federal environment, NYEC determined that reauthorizing WIOA at this moment will be best for our members and the young people they serve, rather than wait to reauthorize the law,” said NYEC’s Executive Director, Dr. Mary Ann Haley. “NYEC remains committed to work closely with Congress and the Administration to make sure that the workforce system prioritizes young people who need to be plugged in to the education and workforce systems.”

To that end, NYEC supports this agreement and calls on Congress to pass it before the end of the year. We look forward to working with our members to ensure that those with systemic barriers to advancement are best served by this reauthorization.