

January 19, 2016

Dear Members of the Arizona Legislature:

Though the business community and education community have many common goals, such as increasing the state's high school graduation rate and improving students' college and career readiness, it is not often that we converge united around a single strategy to achieve these goals. Such is the case with our strong support to Restore Full Funding for Career and Technical Education this year.

Career and Technical Education must support the equally important outcomes of a strong graduation rate and a robust talent pipeline for employers. Though we have more work to do in both areas, restoring funding is critical to maintain the ground we have gained.

CTE student graduation exceeds both the state and national graduation rates with local rates often exceeding 98% percent. **Any erosion of CTE participation puts our graduation rate increases at risk. Changes to CTE should be viewed with this in mind.**

In the spirit of continuous improvement, we embrace the call to ensure funded programs align with employers' needs. However, in the process of doing so, we must not dismiss the value of coursework that retains student interest in completing their K-12 journey. After all, the "career" readiness in **College and Career Ready is part and parcel to CTE programming and outcomes. Without it, we become a one-track system and for this reason must eliminate the "skills penalty" embedded in last year's cuts that reduces base funding for any student participating in a career track course.**

Understandably, hard decisions must be made in the course of designing public budgets. However, in the era of performance-based decision-making, we submit that CTE, delivered through both home-campus satellites and Joint Technical Education District central campuses, is a critically important element of today's K-12 education system and workforce pipeline.

Support for CTE programs is widespread and bipartisan. **A recent Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry poll found that 88 percent of Arizona voters support restoring the cuts made to CTE programs in the last legislative session.**

Over the last few months, we have engaged with you, our state leaders, in a healthy and fruitful dialogue about the future of Career and Technical Education. We appreciate your strong belief in this programming and look forward to finding a path forward that addresses your concerns without jeopardizing the scope of options students already have to explore the world of work and to connect learning to earning.

Lastly, we hope to end here the perceived need to value one type of CTE delivery over another. School choice is built around options, and each delivery option brings a different kind of opportunity for each student based on interest, geography and pathway.

Please do not hesitate to inquire with any of the signers below on questions you may have about Career and Technical Education and how students and employers in your community benefit from this important education and workforce development program.

Sincerely,

Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Arizona Manufacturers Council
Arizona Manufacturing Partnership
Arizona School Boards Association
Association for Career and Technical Education of Arizona
Benson/San Pedro Valley Chamber of Commerce
Buckeye Valley Chamber of Commerce
Coconino Association for Vocations, Industry & Technology
Central Arizona Valley Institute of Technology
Cochise Technology District
Cobre Valley Institute of Technology
Douglas Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
East Valley Chambers of Commerce Alliance
 Apache Junction Chamber of Commerce
 Carefree Cave Creek Chamber of Commerce
 Chandler Chamber of Commerce
 Fountain Hills Chamber of Commerce
 Gilbert Chamber of Commerce
 Mesa Chamber of Commerce
 Queen Creek Chamber of Commerce
 Scottsdale Area Chamber of Commerce
 Tempe Chamber of Commerce
East Valley Partnership
Expect More Arizona
Gila Institute for Technology
Glendale Chamber of Commerce
Greater Flagstaff Chamber of Commerce
Greater Oro Valley Chamber of Commerce
Greater Phoenix Chamber of Commerce
Greater Phoenix Leadership
Lake Havasu Area Chamber of Commerce
Marana Chamber of Commerce
Mesa Public Schools

Mountain Institute Joint Technical Education District
Nogales-Santa Cruz County Chamber of Commerce
Ambos Nogales Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Northeast Arizona Technological Institute of Vocational Education
Northern Arizona Vocational Institute of Technology
Pima County JTED
Prescott Chamber of Commerce
Prescott Valley Chamber of Commerce
Sierra Vista Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Southwest Technical Education District of Yuma
Springerville-Eagar Regional Chamber of Commerce dba Apache County Chambers
of Commerce
Tucson Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Tucson Metro Chamber of Commerce
Valley Academy of Career and Technology Education
Western Arizona Vocational Education
Western Maricopa Education Center
Wickenburg Chamber of Commerce
Yuma County Chamber of Commerce
Greater Yuma Economic Development Council