

Career and Technical Education (CTE) Opportunity Act

Background:

Community colleges and technical schools offer career and technical education (CTE) programs that deliver workforce development and occupational training services. CTE curriculums provide “ready to work” education that empowers students to learn new skills, train on new technologies and earn or maintain industry credentials, professional certificates and licenses. The demand for CTE is high. A 2013 American Institutes for Research estimated 5 million Americans enrolled in noncredit coursework in 2009 alone, accounting for nearly 39 percent of all community college enrollees. Furthermore, approximately 52 percent of noncredit courses offered by community colleges are occupational, vocational or technical in nature.

Problem:

Yet, despite CTE’s vital role in training the workers in Illinois and across the Nation, under Title IV of the Higher Education Act, many students enrolled in CTE programs are *not* eligible for Federal student aid. One size fits all eligibility requirements result in a status quo where Federal student aid is only available to students enrolled in postsecondary programs that stretch over 15 weeks and 600 clock hours.

Solution:

Representative Duckworth’s bipartisan CTE Opportunity Act opens the doors of opportunity for all CTE students by expanding Federal student loan eligibility under Title IV of the Higher Education Act to include students enrolled in short-term CTE programs. The bill will finally eliminate antiquated barriers that hinder Federal investments in “ready to work” education. Students enrolled in programs that lead to an industry-recognized credential and feature at least 250 clock hours, offered during a minimum of 5 weeks of instruction will now be eligible to receive Federal financial aid. The CTE Opportunity Act provides working students throughout America the opportunity to access CTE programs that will improve their skills and enable them to earn industry-recognized credentials that are frequently necessary to secure higher paying jobs.

Representative Ryan Costello (R-PA) and the Co-Chairs of the bipartisan Congressional Career and Technical Education Caucus, Representatives Jim Langevin (D-RI) and Glenn “GT” Thompson (R-PA), are original cosponsors of CTE Opportunity Act. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Co-Founder and Co-Chair of the bipartisan Senate CTE Caucus, introduced the companion measure in the Senate (S. 2064).