



**Testimony of Thomas Applegate  
President  
Association for Career and Technical Education**

**House of Representatives  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education and Related Agencies**

**March 23, 2004**

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**Summary of Testimony:** ACTE will testify about the importance of funding for the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act. The Perkins Act provides funds to prepare youth and adults for further education and employment by building their skills for the careers of today and tomorrow. The Perkins program provides proven links to skills-building opportunities and employment outcomes for youth and adults, and addresses American employers' critical need for a skilled workforce. Perkins is among our nation's most important investments in high schools, a key component of our postsecondary and workforce development systems, and is vital to American business. The testimony will also address concerns regarding the potential impacts of the Administration's proposed cuts to the Perkins program for FY 2005. ACTE urges the Committee to fund the Perkins program at no less than the fiscal year 2004 level of \$1.33 billion, and to consider increasing Perkins funds overall to meet the growing workforce development needs of this country.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for inviting me to testify today on these important issues. I am Thomas Applegate, and I serve as the current President of the Association for Career and Technical Education. ACTE represents approximately 30,000 professionals in the career and technical education -- or CTE -- community, and works to promote and improve a range of education and workforce development policies. Our members are the educators who are working in schools across the country every day to prepare America's workforce. I am also Executive Dean at Austin Community College in Austin, Texas. Austin Community College serves an integral role in preparing current and future workers for the central Texas workforce. The employers of the greater Austin area rely on the job preparation and skills training and upgrading we provide to maintain a competitive position in our global economy. Without the training we provide, many businesses, including the semi-conductor and healthcare industries, would not be able to secure an adequate workforce.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Members of the Subcommittee for your longstanding recognition of the importance of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act. We appreciate your providing the program with a small increase for fiscal year 2004 when the program faced the prospect of severe cuts similar to those proposed in the Administration's budget for fiscal year 2005.

As you know, the Perkins program prepares youth and adults for the future by building their skills for the careers of today and tomorrow – it is essential to strengthening the American workforce. The Perkins program serves more than 11 million students in thousands of secondary and postsecondary settings across the country. It is among our nation's most important investments in high schools, a key component of our postsecondary and workforce development systems, and is vital to American business. **We urge the Committee to fund the Perkins program at no less than the fiscal year 2004 level of \$1.33 billion, and to consider increasing Perkins funds overall to meet the growing workforce development needs of this country.**

The career and technical education supported by the Perkins program provides effective and proven links to skills-building opportunities and improved employment outcomes. According to research by the Southern Regional Education Board, students completing a rigorous academic core coupled with a career concentration have test scores that are equal to or higher than those of students considered to be "college prep", and they are more likely to pursue postsecondary education. Further, they have higher grade point averages in college, are less likely to drop out in the first year of college, and have better employment and earnings outcomes than other students.

We also have evidence that, despite our nation's fluctuating economic and employment pictures, businesses across the nation continue to need well-trained workers with good skills. According to a 2002 survey by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Center for Workforce Preparation, nearly 75 percent of employers report severe conditions when trying to hire qualified workers, 40 percent say that applicants are poorly skilled, and 30 percent say that applicants have the wrong skills for available jobs. The National

Association of Manufacturers found similar results in a 2001 survey, with more than 80 percent of manufacturers experiencing a shortage of qualified job candidates. These shortages will only worsen as large portions of the workforce near retirement age. The education and training supported by Perkins are vital to addressing this skills gap.

The career and technical education community has serious concerns about the Administration's budget request for Perkins. The Administration is again requesting to replace the Perkins program in its current form with a \$1 billion block grant program. This amounts to a 25 percent cut. The Administration's proposals would further eliminate all programs funded under the Perkins Act, including Tech Prep, the Tech Prep Demonstration project, Occupational and Employment Information, and national programs. These cuts would be devastating to Perkins and threaten our schools' ability to provide the career and technical education necessary to create the highly skilled workforce that supports the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy and promotes economic development in our nation's communities.

A 25 percent cut would force already cash-strapped schools, training programs, and community colleges to reduce or eliminate programs that are working well in communities across the country. This cut means hard choices for administrators and teachers, programs lost, and crucial skills-building and educational opportunities diminished or denied for students in our nation. Cuts to Perkins would mean loss of funds for equipment, professional development, career guidance and counseling, integration of academic and technical skills, career and technical student organizations, program improvement, and programs that help CTE students transition to postsecondary opportunities and connect them to business and industry.

In my home state of Ohio, this cut would mean a loss of nearly \$12 million. The impact in other states is of similar concern. For example, California could lose more than \$31 million; New York and Florida could see losses on the order of \$15 million; Pennsylvania and Illinois stand to lose more than \$11 million; in Wisconsin \$5.7 million; Oklahoma, Kentucky, Maryland, and Rhode Island lose in the range of \$3 to \$4 million.

My adopted state of Texas could lose more than \$23 million. For Austin, this would mean, among other things, a loss of the ability to foster partnerships with the K-12 educational system; maintain current technology in our workforce education labs; serve the needs of single parents and displaced homemakers; integrate rigorous academic training into workforce education programs; and respond quickly to the needs of business and industry.

In short, the Perkins program is an essential part of the American workforce development system, and again I ask the Subcommittee to fund the program at no less than fiscal year 2004 levels. Finally, I would strongly urge the Subcommittee to increase funding overall for education and workforce development programs that are vital to maintaining our nation's economic strength. Thank you.