



April 14, 2020

Representative Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives:

Our schools provide support, education and advocacy for opportunity youth in partnership with WIOA job training programs including Job Corps and YouthBuild. We are writing to urge you to provide fiscal support for the young men and women 16 to 24 who have been engaged in one of the hundreds of WIOA training and education programs that have suspended operation during the COVID – 19 pandemic. We provide public high school education to courageous young men and women in your Congressional District who have reengaged in programs designed to overcome poverty, trauma and the lack of education.

As you develop clean-up for the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES), we urge you to include funding to support these students and the programs that serve them. “Opportunity youth” are those young people who have been pushed out of traditional education and left out of the economy. Young people without personal or familial resources are unable to participate meaningfully in the economy. When these young people are reengaged, they will contribute substantially to the economy and to their communities. I can think of no greater investment in our future. Nearly 30,000 reengaged students have earned a diploma from our schools in the past twenty years.

In California, every 1,000 reengaged dropouts generate \$14 million in additional annual earnings; support 90 new California jobs; increase the gross state product by \$19 million; and generate an additional \$1.7 million annually in state and local revenues. Together the young people who have graduated from our schools generate nearly generate \$420 million in additional annual earnings; support 2,700 new California jobs; increase the gross state product by \$470 million; and generate an additional \$51 million annually in state and local revenues. Yet in the U.S. today, 4.5 million young people ages 16-24 are disconnected from work and education. Investing in these young men and women will exponentially

increase the return on CARES dollars long into the future (see more about the benefits of investing in Opportunity Youth at <http://bit.ly/BridgeToReconnection>).

Congress must include workforce and education funding and investments that focus on this economically fragile population in the next stimulus package in response to the public health and economic crisis. Workforce and education investments make a significant difference in improving equity for young workers of color and those struggling to find family sustaining work.

We've identified four principal ways to provide direct support to these youth and to expand the opportunities for them as the crisis subsides and the economy recovers.

- **Expand access to Title I funding.** The recent expansion of Title I funding amounts misses the Opportunity Youth who have reengaged in high school and are over 17. We ask that you help fix this glitch in the Education Stabilization Fund. The Title I funds should be made available to Local Education Agencies which serve students who meet the Title I criteria in Section 1115(c)(1), are enrolled in a public school and are enroll in a WIOA workforce training program. As you know, the Education Stabilization Fund distributes 40% of its fund based on Title I student classification. It's important that the public schools which serve these very-low income youth who meet the categories described in Title I receive Title I funding to continue to serve these youth.
- **Provide Emergency Unemployment Funding and Flexibility:** Each of the major WIOA job training programs defines stipend eligibility and participant unemployment eligibility differently. But one thing is certain, with the WIOA programs suspended, opportunity youth participants have neither the promised jobs, the necessary training nor the resources sufficient to pay for meals and housing. These young people are from very-low income families and many were homeless or aged-out foster youth. With no resources and nowhere left to go, unemployment will assist them in surviving until the crisis resolves and they can come back into job training. Unemployment funding should be available to youth in Federal job training programs until the program suspensions have ended.
- **Increase funding for Job Corps, YouthBuild and other WIOA related local job training programs.** These programs have provided a lifeline for out of work and out of school youth. As the economy falters, these young people are the last hired and the first fired. Their numbers will dramatically increase and the economy will require their participation with the meaningful living wage job skills provided by WIOA programs. We support the initiatives proposed by the Reconnecting Youth Campaign for \$15 billion to support federal, state and local workforce systems through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth activities and other federal Opportunity Youth focused programs such as YouthBuild and Job Corps.
- **Provide Emergency Funding Directly to Nonprofits that Provide Services to Opportunity Youth:** From counseling services to meals and transportation, nonprofits support opportunity youth as they reengage and encourage reengagement for young people who are out of school and out of work. This crisis has resulted in thousands of young people leaving federal programs without reliable homes to return to. Nonprofits are spending significant resources just to find the young people who have left the federal WIOA programs. We support the recommendations of the National Council on Nonprofits and the American Youth Policy Forum for supporting nonprofits

during this crisis ([Why Nonprofits Must Be Included in a COVID-19 Relief and Economic Stimulus Package](#)).

Thank you for your work on these important issues so critical to our collective future. We strongly urge you to include these critical provisions in the CARES Act update.

Sincerely,

Linda Dawson
Superintendent/CEO
SIATech, Inc.

Skip Hansen
President
Learn4Life

Amy Lemley
John Burton Advocates For Youth

Phil Matero
Founder/CEO
YouthBuild Charter Schools California