



February 26, 2018

The Honorable Betsy DeVos  
Secretary of Education  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos:

On behalf of the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), the nation's largest not-for-profit association committed to the advancement of education that prepares youth and adults for career success, and Advance CTE, representing the state and territory leaders of our nation's Career and Technical Education (CTE) system, we write to express opposition to recently reported proposals to eliminate the federal Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) and combine its functions into a new Office of Postsecondary and Lifelong Learning. This proposed action suggests that this Administration does not prioritize CTE or value its impact on the secondary and postsecondary learners it serves. We believe that this proposal demonstrates a lack of understanding of the diversity and complexity of CTE's delivery system and the partnership OCTAE has with the states.

**CTE is both secondary and postsecondary education—and more!** Our nation needs what CTE offers, now more than ever. OCTAE is one of the few federal offices solely dedicated to the dual mission of putting all Americans on a pathway toward a rewarding education *and* career. It accomplishes this mission by supporting programs across the education and workforce continuum. Your proposal to combine the office into a postsecondary-focused entity is particularly troubling and seems to disregard the fact that last year, 68 percent of funding under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, the largest program administered by OCTAE, was allocated to secondary CTE programs.

Secondary CTE helps reduce dropout rates, increases on-time graduation and raises academic engagement, among other benefits. Additionally, many students enroll in a CTE course in high school to explore a passion. This helps learners gauge their interest in a prospective future career by determining if it is one they wish to pursue—or rule out. Merging OCTAE under an umbrella office focused on postsecondary education disregards both the many tangible benefits that high-quality CTE provides to students embedded in the secondary education system and the unique needs involved in delivering such programs.

It is important that a CTE and adult education office remain separate to ensure a strong, dedicated voice for these programs that are uniquely positioned in today's education system and do not fit within the individual silos of secondary or postsecondary education. A dedicated federal office is essential to effectively drive overall Department policy and ensure Americans can access education that provides

them with the skills necessary to succeed in the 21st century economy. Without a dedicated office and leader, efforts to spread the positive message of CTE's impact and provide programs in the field with the support and resources needed to serve all students will be severely hampered at best, and lost in the shuffle or discontinued at worst. The nation's millions of CTE and adult education students deserve their own dedicated office and leader to advocate for their diverse needs and programs.

We are disappointed that the CTE leaders that OCTAE serves and supports were not consulted nor given the opportunity to have input into this proposal. Our members hold OCTAE in high regard; over the years we have worked together to shift the relationship between OCTAE and the CTE field from mere compliance to collaboration and support for the advancement of high-quality CTE. Our opposition to this proposal is not derived from a desire to protect the status quo. We, too, are believers in continuous improvement and efficiency. However, we believe this proposal will have a deleterious impact on CTE and the learners it serves. For that reason, we strongly urge you to reverse plans to eliminate or merge OCTAE. Instead, we ask you to expeditiously move forward on filling key staff positions within the office, including working with the President to nominate a qualified Assistant Secretary for Career, Technical, and Adult Education. **We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss these concerns.** Please feel free to contact us to arrange an appropriate time or if you have any questions about our comments.

Sincerely,



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