

Committee Adopts Altmire Amendment to Help Colleges Meet Emerging Workforce Needs

(Washington, DC) - Today, U.S. Congressman Jason Altmire (PA-4), a member of the House Education and Labor Committee, passed an amendment to the College Opportunity and Affordability Act (H.R. 4137) that will create "Business and Industry Workforce Partnerships" between colleges and employers that will link credit-bearing courses with business workforce needs. The partnerships would identify high-demand jobs in local labor markets, create educational pathways to these occupations for students, and increase the supply of high-skilled workers in targeted industries. The amendment was adopted by the House Education and Labor Committee by a vote of 24 to 16.

"In Pennsylvania, a recent study found that 82 percent of employers are having trouble hiring qualified workers," said Congressman Altmire. "Shortages have been identified in advanced manufacturing, information technology, nursing, and child care. If our country is to stay competitive, we must find ways to ensure that colleges are being responsive to the needs of local employers."

Congressman Altmire's amendment would create Business Workforce Partnership grants to fund partnerships between colleges and employers that link credit-bearing college programs to business workforce needs and create educational pathways and ladders for students to access jobs. The pathways would create new courses, adapt college offerings to workers' schedules, expand worksite learning opportunities, and assist students with job placements. The grant program would build on and strengthen existing state efforts to partner colleges with employers, including Job Ready Pennsylvania, and create new initiatives where they do not currently exist.

Congressman Altmire added, "Workforce training generally takes place on the non-credit side of college. As a result, students who participate do not qualify for financial aid and are not earning credits toward a degree. By helping to move these courses to the credit-bearing side of college education, my amendment will make workforce training courses more accessible and more valuable."

"With the passage of this legislation, training will be expanded and improved with various options available," wrote Butler Community College President Dr. Nicholas C. Neupauer in a November 13 letter. "This is a winning situation for the employers, [Congressman Altmire's] constituents, and the College. A well-trained labor force not only keeps businesses competitive, but makes this region more attractive to new businesses and industry."

In addition to Butler County Community College, Congressman Altmire's amendment is supported by the Community College of Allegheny County, the American Association of Community Colleges, Workforce Alliance, and the Center for Law and Social Policy.

The College Opportunity and Affordability Act also includes two bills previously authored by Congressman Altmire: the Improving Teacher Diversity Act (H.R. 4045) and the Student Disability Fairness Act (H.R. 4046). The Improving Teacher Diversity Act would improve the diversity of our nation's teaching force by providing competitive grants to minority serving institutions to help recruit and prepare new teachers. The Student Disability Fairness Act would require the Department of Education to accept certifications of total and permanent disability from the Department of Veterans' Affairs for the purpose of student loan cancellation. With completion of the House Education and Labor Committee's markup of the

College Opportunity and Affordability Act (H.R. 4137), the bill now moves to the full House for consideration.