September 16, 2016

On behalf of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Education Task Force, we write to express our deep concerns with provisions included in the draft bill released by Chairman Alexander to reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. We cannot support a bill that intentionally weakens the Department of Education from exercising its authority to oversee the implementation and enforcement of the program. This restriction sets an untenable precedent that threatens both the civil rights of students with disabilities as well as their access to beneficial instruction, programming and other educational opportunities available via career and technical education (CTE) programs. The Secretary needs authority to provide formal and non-regulatory guidance to promote equity and make these programs fully and consistently open to under-represented groups of students.

In addition to the prohibition provisions, the CCD Education Task Force urges the Senate to consider more fully recommendations provided by the Task Force to improve the law so it can better serve students with disabilities. While we are very pleased to see improvements related to preparing personnel to use universal design principles – which help support greater access to instruction and materials as well as important improvements in data collection – we hope you will consider stronger language to reach out to students and their families and active recruitment by faculty to ensure students with disabilities have the opportunity to enroll in these programs.

We are grateful for your bipartisan work and collaboration with stakeholders on the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). We urge you to strive for agreement again and create a truly bipartisan bill that will meet the needs of all youth and families. We look forward to working with you to reauthorize the bill.

Sincerely,

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