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March 17, 2015

The Honorable Thomas Perez
Secretary
United States Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Secretary Perez:

The recently enacted *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA) made several important reforms to the Job Corps program in an effort to ensure that program participants, some of our nation's most disadvantaged youth, receive high quality education, workforce development, and support services in order to become more employable, responsible, and productive citizens. In crafting the new law, Congress devoted considerable attention to problems associated with the Job Corps program in the past, including improving the quality of Job Corps center operators and the process by which the Department selects them.

Passed with overwhelming bipartisan support, WIOA includes important provisions to increase the rigor and competitiveness of the procurement process for Job Corps center operations. To ensure the selection of high quality providers, the law includes several significant changes to the criteria used by the Department to select Job Corps center operators. Under the Act, the Secretary is required to utilize an expanded list of criteria in identifying entities eligible to operate a Job Corps center, such as an applicant's demonstrated record of effectiveness, including past performance of operating a Job Corps center. These additional requirements added to the law were carefully considered and selected for their potential to help address systemic problems associated with the program and ultimately improve the quality of center operators. Quality should be the guiding factor when choosing operators, and we want to be clear, the intent of Congress is that the Secretary apply all additional selection factors under WIOA for all center competitions from this point forward.

Recently, it has come to the Committee's attention that since the passage of WIOA approximately two-thirds of the competitively bid Job Corps contracts have been or are being scheduled for contractor selections in advance of the law's effective date and promulgation of regulations implementing the new statutory requirements for contractor quality. As it is

The Honorable Thomas Perez

March 17, 2015

Page 2

extremely rare that a Job Corps operator does not fulfill their five-year contract even in the case of poor performance, it is crucial that all new operating contracts be awarded based on the enhanced selection criteria so high quality operators can begin to serve program participants now, not years in the future. To that end, we request the Department immediately implement the new WIOA requirements for contractor quality or otherwise defer further center contractor selections by using long accepted procedures, such as bridge contracting and extensions of existing contracts, until such time as these new quality standards can be put into practice.

Additionally, please immediately provide the Committee with a report regarding the number of Job Corps center contractor selections completed or likely to be completed between the enactment date of WIOA (July 22, 2014) and the anticipated date by which the Department will complete final regulations implementing new WIOA requirements for contractor quality, the procurement method used or scheduled to be used for any completed procurements or planned procurements, and the selection criteria used to award any contracts since the passage of WIOA.

We request a response to this letter no later than March 27, 2015, as well as a briefing following receipt of your written response to the questions outlined above. We appreciate your prompt attention to this matter. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Emily Slack (emily.slack@mail.house.gov) with the House Education and the Workforce Committee at (202) 225-6558.

Sincerely,



JOHN KLINE

Chairman

Committee on Education and the Workforce



VIRGINIA FOXX

Chairwoman

Subcommittee on Higher Education and
Workforce Training