

**FY 2024 WRITTEN TESTIMONY FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED TO THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
LABOR, HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES, EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES**

NAF is a national non-profit organization that transforms the high school experience to prepare students for college, career, and future success. Our educational design is replicable, sustainable, and cost-effective, and because it integrates within public schools, supports lasting systemic reform and equity nationwide. NAF believes Congress should invest in programs that provide quality career and technical education for high school students, including support for paid work-based learning. We urge Congress to support increased funding to the Department of Education for the Perkins Basic State Grant and the Career and Technical Education National Programs. We urge Congress to support increased funding for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I State Formula Grants at the Department of Labor. Finally, we urge Congress to restate the need for work-based learning coordinators for high school students and provide the necessary funding.

**Department of Education**

NAF respectfully requests \$200 million in FY2024 for the Career-Connected High Schools initiative within the CTE National Programs. This funding supports competitive grants to consortia of local educational agencies, institutions of higher education, nonprofits and employers to help integrate and align the last two years of high school and the first two years of postsecondary education and would include paid work-based learning experiences, as well as funds for technical assistance, evaluation, and other ongoing activities. These partnerships would create new structures and supports to help high school students—with a focus on underserved students—develop and navigate clear pathways to postsecondary education and career preparation, accrue college credit, pursue in-demand, high-value credentials, and gain direct experience and skills in the workplace that lead to high-quality jobs. An additional competitive

priority would focus on paid work-based learning and funds could be used to support stipends for program participants, particularly important for students from low-income backgrounds.

NAF respectfully requests a \$400 million increase in FY2024 to the Perkins Basic State Grant as it is the principal source of dedicated federal funding for career and technical education and is currently funded at least \$320 million below its inflation-adjusted level from twenty years ago. Perkins funding provides critical programs and supports to students in every district such as career counseling, dual enrollment, work-based learning, and industry-recognized credentials.

### **Department of Labor**

NAF respectfully requests robust funding for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I State Formula Grants, including funding for Youth Programs. The budget for Title I programs falls nearly one billion dollars short of the funding in 2001 before adjusting for inflation. We remind Congress of its request to the Department to encourage local secondary education authorities to be included on local workforce development boards and furthermore to increase the availability and support for in-school youth.

NAF urges the subcommittee to reiterate its support for and include the following report language:

*Research shows that participation in work-based learning during high school has a positive impact on students, including completing high school, and helps them secure higher-quality jobs, boosting equity and economic opportunity. The Committee recommends \$5,000,000 in Fiscal Year 2024 for the first year of a five-year demonstration program to provide full-time,*

*work-based learning coordinators in underserved communities with an already proven track record for secondary career and technical education. Work-based learning coordinators conduct outreach, engagement, recruitment and coordination of work-based learning activities, including, but not limited to, paid internships or pre-apprenticeships for high school students, with local community employers, especially with in-demand industries of information technology, health sciences, and engineering. The work-based learning coordinators may be employed by the local education agency, local workforce development board or local workforce development agency, a group of employers, or a consortium of eligible entities. In making grant awards, the Committee directs the Secretary to require a plan for evaluations in each individual grant proposal, including types of work-based learning opportunities completed, demographics of participating students, and students' post-secondary career plan, as well as to conduct a national assessment of all grantee proposals once complete.*

Public secondary education institutions play a critical role in preparing youth for future success through initiatives like career and technical education programs, access to local colleges, and work-based learning opportunities with employers. As a principal public institution that teens attend before becoming adults, the secondary education system plays an invaluable role in empowering the next generation for success in the workforce. Work-based learning programs ensure a connection between schools and the working world, whether it's preparing students to enter existing jobs, encouraging entrepreneurial endeavors, or serving as a foundation for career opportunities after post-secondary education.

Work-based learning has proven impacts on earnings, job quality and stability and is a critical lever in addressing systemic racial and economic inequities. Students in NAF academies are more likely to graduate on-time than their peers who are not involved with career academies. NAF has an overall positive effect on all students but is particularly impactful for those at-risk of not graduating—with full, four-year program participation in a high-quality career academy, these students were ten percentage points more likely to graduate on-time than their non-NAF counterparts. Black and Hispanic students attending NAF academies also are shown to have higher high school graduation rates.<sup>ii</sup> Students who graduated from a career academy **amassed 11% more total earnings each year** over the eight years following high school than those who did not attend a career academy. Youth who drop out of high school can expect to earn \$10,000 less annually compared to high school graduates.<sup>iii</sup> During the 2022-23 school year, more than 112,000 students attended 604 NAF academies across 35 states and territories. NAF academies reported 99% of the seniors graduated with 88% of graduates planning to go to college.

Work-based learning helps students build relationships, sharpen essential skills, and expand their networks beyond their immediate communities. Relationships with adults nurtured through work-based learning opportunities are also shown to be long-lasting and beneficial to students up to a decade later. **Eighty percent of jobs are filled through personal and professional connections.**<sup>iii</sup> Young people deserve an education that builds workforce essential skills, helps them create social capital, and connects them to opportunity.

While funding to schools for career and technical education is provided through the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, this funding cannot be used to pay students for their work.

However, **paid internships are vital to closing the equity gap.** Moreover, opportunities to intern in the nonprofit and government sectors can foster interest in public service careers among underserved students. This potential for increased awareness of civic affairs would represent an important step toward a more engaged and inclusive democracy.

## **Conclusion**

Work-based learning is advantageous for employers and communities. It is a proven way to grow the talent pipeline and help prepare students for the workforce.<sup>iv</sup> By partnering with high schools to provide work-based learning opportunities to students, employers play an active role in developing a talent pipeline aligned with their workforce needs. Employers also gain the opportunity to observe prospective employees in action before making the investment to hire them.<sup>v</sup> **The nation must invest in work-based learning, so workers have the skills they need to succeed, and employers have the diverse talent they need to thrive.** NAF appreciates the opportunity to share its expertise and appreciates you for considering this vital request.

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<sup>i</sup> Kemple, J. J., & Willner, C. J. (2008). Career Academies Long-Term Impacts on Labor Market Outcomes., mdrc.

<sup>ii</sup> ICF. (2017). Transforming the American High School Experience: NAF's Cohort's Graduation Rates from 2011-2015, 2017.

<sup>iii</sup> Fisher, J. F. (2020, February 14). How to get a job often comes down to one elite personal asset, and many people still don't realize it. Retrieved from CNBC: <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/12/27/how-to-get-a-job-often-comes-down-to-one-elite-personal-asset.html>

<sup>iv</sup> Ross, M., Moore, K. A., Murphy, K., Bateman, N., DeMand, A., & Sacks, V. (2018, October). Pathways to high-quality jobs for young adults. Retrieved from Brookings: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/pathways-to-high-quality-jobs-for-young-adults/>

<sup>v</sup> Benefits of Work-Based Learning. (n.d.). Retrieved from JFF: <https://www.jff.org/what-we-do/impact-stories/center-for-apprenticeship-and-work-based-learning/benefits-work-based-learning/#:~:text=Jobseekers%20also%20see%20work%2Dbased,of%20%20a%20skilled%20regional%20workforce>