

ALA American Library Association

May 22, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairman
Budget Committee
624 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Johnny Isakson
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Employment and Workplace Safety
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
131 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Kline
Chairman
Committee Education and the Workforce
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable George Miller
Senior Democrat
Committee Education and the Workforce
2101 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Higher Education &
Workforce Training
Committee Education and the Workforce
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ruben Hinojosa
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Higher Education &
Workforce Training
Committee Education and the Workforce
2101 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators and Representatives:

On behalf of the American Library Association (ALA), I am writing in strong support of the bipartisan Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

Libraries play an indispensable role in providing workforce development and adult education and literacy services in communities across the nation. But because many local jurisdictions face funding shortfalls, resources for public libraries are being cut and many libraries are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain the necessary materials, programming, technology, and staff to help those seeking better jobs.


Therefore, ALA is pleased to support the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, which would strengthen the capacity of libraries to obtain support under the Workforce Investment Act. ALA is particularly encouraged that the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act includes provisions that:

- Ensure State Workforce Development Boards develop strategies for technological improvements to facilitate access to, and improve the quality of, services and activities provided through the one-stop delivery system, including improvements to enhance digital literacy skills (as defined in section 202 of the Museum and Library Services Act) under section 101(d)(7) – Functions of the State Workforce Development Board.

- Ensure Local Workforce Development Boards develop strategies for using technology to maximize the accessibility and effectiveness of the local workforce development system by increasing access to services and programs of the one-stop delivery system, such as improving digital literacy skills under section 107(d)(7)(C) – Functions of the Local Workforce Development Board.
- Authorize employment, education, and training programs provided by public libraries as additional one-stop partners under section 121(b)(2)(B)(vii) – Additional One-Stop Partners.
- Prohibits any department, agency, officer, or employee of the United States to exercise any direction, supervision, or control over the selection of library resources under section 129(c)(6) – Prohibitions.
- Authorizes adult education and literacy activities provided by public libraries as an Allowable Statewide Employment and Training Activity under section 134(a)(3)(A)(viii)(II)(dd) – Allowable Statewide Employment and Training Activities.
- Authorizes a public library as an eligible provider of adult education and literacy services under section 203(5)(F) – Definition of Eligible Provider.
- Includes a definition of “workforce preparation activities” that specifically includes digital literacy skills under section 203(17) – Definition of Workforce Preparation Activities.
- Authorizes technical assistance activities related to the development and dissemination of proven models for addressing the digital literacy needs of adults, including older adults under section 242(c)(1)(C) – National Leadership Activities.
- Encourages support for national, regional, or local networks of private nonprofit organizations, public libraries, or institutions of higher education to strengthen the ability of those organizations to meet various performance requirements under section 242(c)(2)(B) – National Leadership Activities.

Thanks again for your bipartisan efforts on this legislation. ALA believes that the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act recognizes and supports the critical role libraries play in improving our nation’s workforce development activities. We look forward to working with you to help enact this critical legislation as well as assisting the American public in addressing their employment services needs.

Sincerely,



Emily Sheketoff, Executive Director
Washington Office, American Library Association