HR 2353 [2], or the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, was reauthorized by President Donald Trump through fiscal year 2023, under the new title Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V). The act was first established in 1984, then reauthorized in 1998, 2006 and now 2018 to increase the quality of career and technical education (CTE). This act adds $100 million over six years—an 11 percent increase over the fiscal year 2018 funding levels—aimed to expand the reach of CTE programs.

The new resolution states for fiscal year 2018-2019, no state shall receive an allotment less than the allotment received in 1998 for CTE programs. The bill increases the states’ ability to reserve funds in a variety of categories. These include general CTE funding allocations and leadership activities serving individuals in juvenile justice facilities and individuals with disabilities.

“The Perkins CTE Act funds the programs that help train the skilled workers we need—for example, a high school student looking to become a computer coder, or an adult going back to school to learn about commercial construction,” said Sen. Lamar Alexander of Tennessee in a U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions briefing [3]. “This reauthorization makes important updates to the law, including limiting the role of the Secretary of Education, so states don’t have to ask, ‘Mother May I,’ when they want to make changes to do what is best for their students and increases expectations that states will hold themselves accountable for student achievement.”

In the 2017-2018 legislative sessions in the states, a slew of CTE bills were introduced, passed or enacted. Missouri enacted HB 1415 [4], which authorizes schools to use coursework and skills assessments for industry-recognized certificates and credentials when developing CTE pathways for students. The bill specifically allows students to opt out of the normal ACT and opt-in to the ACT WorkKeys assessment, which measures skills required for success in the workplace.

Florida, the state in which Trump announced the signing of the resolution, passed HB 577 [5]. The bill allows high schoolers to participate in CTE-based apprenticeships for fulfillment of a graduation requirement. Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maryland, Michigan, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin also enacted legislation regarding implementation of apprenticeships.

Though quietly added, Perkins V includes stipulations regarding occupational licensing. Section 124.8.B allows states to use federal funding for CTE to be used for examination of licenses or certifications that provide an unnecessary hurdle to entry into the workforce and that do not protect the health, safety or welfare of consumers. This comes as an attempt to allow an alternate pathway to fund efforts to increase reciprocity of professional licensing between states.

CTE has often been overlooked as a path to employment. Nationally, there is a shortage of CTE employees, including workers in the construction industry, STEM fields, culinary fields and even CTE educators. The shortage of employees to meet the needs of employers makes CTE a pressing issue for states. States must be aware of CTE as it not only strengthens their economy, it also creates a unique business climate within their borders.