

# Congress Takes Steps Towards Career And Technical Education Act Reauthorization; Executive Action Expected On Accreditation



Article By

[Roxana E. Boyd](#)

[Samantha A. Martin](#)

[Amy F. Davenport](#)

[Amy B Smith](#)

[Squire Patton Boggs \(US\) LLP](#)

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## Legislative Activity

### Perkins Career and Technical Education Act Reauthorization

The House Education and the Workforce Committee announced last week it will hold a hearing on Tuesday, October 27 focused on the rewriting of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. In addition to the House Education Committee's announcement, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee recently released a call for stakeholder input on several Career and Technical Education (CTE) principles. More specifically, Senators Enzi (R-WY) and Casey (D-PA) circulated the following eight bipartisan principles on which they are looking for recommendations:

- Make it easier for States and locals to run their CTE programs to serve all students who desire to gain access to CTE coursework, including students with disabilities;
- Increase access to, and support of, career counseling for all CTE students;  
Maintain CTE as a formula program;
- Align with ESEA and WIOA (where applicable) to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the

education and workforce development programs;

- Support the expansion of public/private collaborations with secondary and post-secondary programs, including alignment with State or locally-determined in-demand industries and occupations;
- Support efforts to integrate into and strengthen career pathways at the state and local levels;
- Address unfunded programs; and
- Improve evaluation and research to support innovation and best practices.

## House Passes DC Voucher Legislation

Last Wednesday, by a mostly party-line vote, the House passed the Scholarships for Opportunity and Results, or SOAR, Act ([HR 10](#)), which would update and reauthorize the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship (voucher) Program for an additional five years. On November 4, the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee will continue the discussion, holding a hearing on reauthorizing the DC voucher program.

## This Week's Hearings:

- Tuesday, October 27: House Education and the Workforce — Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education will hold a hearing on “Improving Career and Technical Education to Help Students Succeed in the Workforce.”

## Regulatory Activity

### Accreditation Executive Action

The Obama Administration is planning to announce a new executive action related to higher education accreditation that would encourage accreditors to focus more on student outcomes when reviewing the performance of colleges and universities. The Department has not released many details about the upcoming executive action but did note that it likely will be included as part of a package of proposals that would also include potential regulatory reform and proposed legislation for Congress to consider. It is planning to issue the executive action “this month” so we expect the announcement this week.

Throughout the year, the Department of Education has continued to call on accreditors to hold colleges and universities accountable to increasing their completion rates and other improved student outcomes, particularly for-profit schools. Under Secretary of Education Ted Mitchell recently noted that the for-profit Corinthian Colleges were accredited when they declared bankruptcy, pointing to the ineffectiveness of the accreditation entities that accredited the schools. Additionally, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) has called for the accreditor for many of the for-profit schools – the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools – to testify as part of an investigation regarding its role in potentially illegal activity related to its accreditation of for-profit schools. While the details about the executive action are few at this point, it is possible that it will focus on holding for-profit schools accountable to higher standards for student outcomes.

## Teaching Equity Plans

The Department of Education added 17 states and the District of Columbia to its growing list of

approved teaching equity plans to improve student access to quality teachers. The Department of Education made the [announcement](#) last Thursday, bringing the total number of approved teaching equity plans to 34 with the additions of Alaska, Alabama, Arizona, California, Georgia, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia, Vermont, Washington, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia.

The teaching equity plans are part of the Department's comprehensive Excellent Educators for All Initiative, launched in July 2014, to improve student access to quality teachers through meaningful strategies and solutions. The plans approved this week include strategies to strengthen teacher preparation programs, increase data-driven decision-making, provide teacher incentives to encourage and retain excellent educators, and increase accountability by publicly reporting progress. The Department will continue to review the remaining state plans for approval on a rolling basis.

## Department Releases Undocumented Students Resource Guide

Last Thursday, the Department of Education released a [resource guide](#) to help schools to better support undocumented youth, including Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients. The guide includes actionable information and resources that educators, principals, and school district leaders can use to improve outcomes for undocumented high school and college students. The goal of the guide is to help educators and school staff better support undocumented youth and clarify the students' legal rights and financial aid options.

Since DACA's implementation in 2012, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has allowed certain undocumented students who came to the U.S. as children to receive a renewable two-year work permit and an exemption from deportation. Since that time, more than 680,000 young people have been received relief under DACA though researchers estimate that nearly 1.5 undocumented youth in the U.S. are currently eligible for DACA. The resource guide seeks to provide additional assistance and guidance for schools to address issues that may come with serving DACA students and provide guidance on how to encourage students that might be eligible for DACA to apply. While this resource guide focuses only on DACA students in high school and college, the Department plans to release another guide for early learning and elementary school students in the coming months.

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