



April 9, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Committee on Healthcare, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Committee on Healthcare, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

Thank you for your efforts and interest to address America's workforce development challenges with stakeholder input from associations like the National Roofing Contractors Association (NRCA) and a prioritization on bipartisan solutions. We applaud your effort to update and expand workforce training programs, reform the National Apprenticeship Act, and encourage innovative solutions to address our current economic climate, particularly as the COVID-19 pandemic has the potential to dramatically change the future of work.

Established in 1886, NRCA is one of the nation's oldest trade associations and the voice of roofing professionals worldwide. NRCA's nearly 4,000 member companies represent all segments of the industry, including contractors, manufacturers, distributors, consultants and other employers in all 50 states and internationally. NRCA members are typically small, privately held companies with the average member employing 45 people and attaining sales of \$4.5 million per year. NRCA provides skills and leadership training, certification programs, and technical assistance and educational materials for our members to provide the resources they need to meet our industry specific workforce challenges.

Chronic workforce shortages remain the top challenge facing roofing industry employers as demographic trends make it increasingly difficult to find qualified candidates for well-paying, family-sustaining jobs. Greater investment in workforce training is essential to providing strategies and tools to help employers address workforce development needs.

NRCA is working proactively to address our industry's serious workforce development challenges. We have spent millions of dollars to develop and implement ProCertification, a comprehensive program that aims to certify over 100,000 workers over the next decade to promote professionalism and expand career paths for new and existing workers. ProCertification provides a state-of-the-art, standardized industry training curriculum along with a correlating series of system-specific professional certifications. This new model delivers a streamlined and affordable approach to workforce development with a clearly defined industry career path and encourages on-going training to achieve higher levels of skill and compensation through

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structured earn-and-learn work opportunities. In addition, NRCA has developed a new training program for the roofing industry entitled Training for Roof Application Careers (TRAC).

We believe the success of ProCertification and TRAC in attracting more Americans to a career in the roofing industry is vital to meeting future workforce needs. We are very interested in working with the Senate HELP Committee to improve federal policy in ways that will help roofing industry employers better address their workforce development needs and believe the ProCertification and TRAC could play a greater role with improved policies. Attached is our promotional material on ProCertification and TRAC for your information.

To enhance and improve workforce training in direct relation to the COVID-19 pandemic and economic recovery, NRCA recommends the *Workforce Recovery and Training Services Act* (S.4239), introduced in the 116th Congress. This bill establishes a grant program for states to provide employment training services to adults and dislocated workers. Of these funds, a specified amount must be allocated to areas most significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

NRCA also supports the bipartisan *Gateway to Careers Act of 2021* (S. 52) as one **strategy to encourage innovation to address worker and industry needs**. This bill establishes a career pathway grant program through which the Department of Education must award competitive grants to certain public institutions of higher education and postsecondary technical education schools. Grant recipients must use these funds to (1) carry out activities that support the development and implementation of career pathway programs, and (2) provide support services to students engaged in career pathway programs.

NRCA appreciates the **HELP Committee's interest in how to develop, modernize, and diversify the national apprenticeship system, including innovative approaches such as youth apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship**. NRCA recommends the national apprenticeship system be improved by expanding accessibility to apprenticeship programs in the roofing industry. This could be accomplished through development by third parties including trade and industry groups, companies, non-profit organizations, unions, and joint labor-management organizations. In particular, the streamlining of existing apprenticeship programs so that they are more compatible with competency-based programs like ProCertification and TRAC is critical to expanding accessibility to apprenticeships within our industry. There is much evidence that indicates traditional time-based apprenticeship programs, while effective in some instances, are not sufficient to meet current workforce demands for many industries in the 21st century, and that current programs should be supplemented with new, innovative performance-based training programs that are adaptable to rapidly changing markets.

NRCA is largely in agreement with extensive comments on how to improve and expand apprenticeships submitted previously to the House of Representatives regarding the National Apprenticeship Act by the Opportunity America Jobs and Careers Coalition, which are enclosed for your review and consideration.

Finally, NRCA recommends the committee review how the **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act** can be improved to help address the workforce development needs of the

roofing industry. We believe that streamlining or removing obstacles that affect the ability of employers to access funds for training and providing more flexibility within the federal workforce development system could help improve the accessibility of WIOA funding to facilitate the expansion of our ProCertification and TRAC programs. We are largely in agreement with the enclosed Employer Input on WIOA provided by the Opportunity American Jobs and Careers Coalition as these comments are consistent with feedback from our membership.

Thank you for again for making workforce development a top priority of the Committee and for your careful consideration of NRCA's views. If you have questions or need more information, please contact Duane Musser (DMusser@nrca.net) or Deb Mazol (DMazol@nrca.net) in our Washington, D.C. office at (202) 546-7584.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Reid Ribble". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Reid Ribble
Chief Executive Officer

Enclosures (3)