

June 4, 2014



Greater
Flagstaff
Chamber
of Commerce

Dear Senator Flake,

I am writing to convey my enthusiastic support for the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* currently under consideration in the Senate. As an economic developer responsible for spurring local job creation and employability skills required to enter the labor force, the Greater Flagstaff Chamber recognizes that workforce development is essential to growing our economy, now and in the future.

Economic development organizations operate at the local, regional and state level. We have a boots-on-the-ground view of our regional economy and understand better than most what is needed to spur job creation in our communities. Day in and day out, our profession works tirelessly to grow local economies by supporting business growth and development, encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation, and promoting foreign and domestic investment.

The time to act is now. The *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* represents strong steps forward as our workforce needs move past what can be provided by the *Workforce Investment Act of 1998*. A study from Georgetown University estimates that in the next eight years, the United States will fall short of the necessary number of skilled workers with the appropriate education to fill the needs of corporate America by over 11 million people. By passing this legislation, Congress provides our nation with vital tools for improving our workforce development system and therefore elevating employment opportunities for many capable Americans.

We applaud this smart legislation in that it creates a more streamlined workforce development system by eliminating 15 duplicative existing programs and applies a single set of outcome metrics to every federal workforce program. Furthermore, it places decision making power in the hands of local boards to tailor services to their own 'community specific' labor needs. It also addresses the critical problem of unemployment among youth, which is at an all time high, and disabled persons, by focusing on outreach programs and training services to enhance employability skills amongst these demographics.

For economic developers, like the Greater Flagstaff Chamber, it is encouraging to see bipartisan, bicameral legislation such as this come to realization because collaborating together to create an educated and capable workforce is a top priority for the future of our Northern Arizona region and the United States of America.

The Greater Flagstaff Chamber encourages your support for this bill. Thank you, Senator Flake, for your leadership for our state and nation, and for the friendship you have shown to the Flagstaff community.

Sincerely,

Julie M. Pastrick

Julie M. Pastrick
President & CEO
Greater Flagstaff Chamber of Commerce