



“The unified voice of the North American heating, ventilation, air-conditioning and refrigeration industry”

March 16, 2026

Chairman Tim Walberg
Committee on Education and the Workforce
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Bobby Scott
Committee on Education and the Workforce
2101 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Bill Cassidy
Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Ranking Member Bernie Sanders
Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Walberg and Cassidy and Ranking Members Scott and Sanders:

On behalf of the heating, ventilation, air conditioning, refrigeration (HVACR) and water heating industry, we write to express our strong support for H.R. 4049 and S.3846, the Employer-Directed Skills Act, introduced by Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-NY) and Sen. Ted Budd (R-NC), respectively. We urge Congress to advance this legislation as an integral part of the much-needed reauthorization and modernization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) in the 119th Congress.

The HVACR and water heating industry represents millions of engineers, manufacturers, distributors, contractors, and building technology professionals. In North America, the annual economic activity resulting from our industry is more than \$211 billion, and in the United States alone, HVACR manufacturers, distributors, contractors, designers, and technicians, employ more than 700,000 people.

Our industry faces a persistent labor shortage and growing skills gap that threatens our collective ability to meet customer demand, design and produce equipment, and install and maintain essential building systems nationwide. Industry professionals across the country report difficulty finding and retaining qualified employees, even as demand for the industry’s products and services rises. Our organizations and member companies have stepped up to fill the gap, investing millions in innovative partnerships and in-house training programs, but traditional education systems have often been slow to support these initiatives.

The Employer-Directed Skills Act recognizes this reality by aligning training programs with real-world job requirements, allowing employers to select trainees, and providing employers with flexible training resources and targeted financial incentives. While current WIOA requirements are well-intentioned, many of the existing restrictions and administrative stipulations have created barriers to meaningful workforce development in the skilled trades. This legislation would help clear these obstacles. Importantly, this

policy was included in last year's bipartisan, House-passed WIOA reauthorization. As such, we encourage its inclusion in any WIOA reauthorization effort in the 119th Congress.

In addition, we respectfully request that Congress:

- Reauthorize WIOA to address the modern needs of employers and workers in the skilled trades.
- Partner with employers and industry stakeholders to promote workforce policies that reflect on-the-ground hiring and training realities.
- Support programs that expand the talent pipeline through career and technical education, STEM, and vocational pathways that introduce students to HVACR and water heating careers.

The undersigned organizations offer their assistance to help develop and implement workforce policies that support economic growth, opportunity, and a resilient built environment. We greatly appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Air Conditioning Contractors of America (ACCA)

Air-Conditioning, Heating and Refrigeration Institute (AHRI)

American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE)

Heating, Air-Conditioning & Refrigeration Distributors International (HARDI)

National Air Filtration Association (NAFA)

North American Technician Excellence (NATE)

Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors – National Association (PHCC)