

January 26, 2022

The Honorable Elise Stefanik
United States House of Representatives
318 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Employer-Directed Skills Act

Dear Congresswoman Stefanik:

The Association of Woodworking & Furnishings Suppliers® (AWFS®) writes to express our full support for the Employer-Directed Skills Act (H.R. 6255). AWFS is a leading national trade association representing suppliers of the wood manufacturing industry. Our members include manufacturers and distributors of machinery, hardware, lumber, wood products, and other supplies. Most of the companies in our industry are small, family-owned businesses with less than ten employees.

Despite actively hiring for high-paying, technical, and design-oriented jobs, our industry struggles to fill open positions because potential employees often lack the training and technical skills necessary for the roles. As manufacturing roles become more technical and a significant portion of our workforce retires, the skills gap is widening. Because of the unique requirements for jobs in the wood industry, AWFS member companies and their customers often develop tailored, in-house training programs for prospective employees.

AWFS aims to strengthen and develop industry education to better qualify the current workforce and equip the next generation of wood industry professionals. The Employer-Directed Skills Act would allow employer-directed training programs to be an authorized use of WIOA funds, thus allowing employers to be partially reimbursed for training programs they are already facilitating. Empowering businesses to leverage creative solutions to their employment needs is critical to ensuring our industry has a workforce pipeline for years to come.

As efforts to reauthorize the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act begin, AWFS is grateful for your support of legislation that will help our industry address workforce challenges. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to build support for the passage of this legislation.

Thank you,

Angelo Gangone
Executive Vice President
Association of Woodworking & Furnishings Suppliers®

Adria Salvatore
Assistant Executive Director, Education
Association of Woodworking & Furnishings Suppliers®