



STATE OF INDIANA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
State House, Second Floor
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Eric J. Holcomb
Governor

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Murray and Burr;

Thank you for the opportunity to share Indiana's recommendations as the Senate HELP Committee works toward bipartisan legislation to support, update and expand workforce training programs, support and expand the National Apprenticeship Act, and encourage innovation. Without better connections between education and employment, individual opportunity for economic mobility suffers as does our state's and nation's economic growth. We believe Indiana has created model, innovative programs that should be considered as a basis for future federal action.

We plan for the state's workforce development needs around a common set of goals and measurable outcomes focusing on meeting Hoosiers where they are, providing them the necessary education and training tied to high-wage, high-demand jobs our employers have identified. At the same time, we work to continuously improve Indiana's system by measuring progress toward median wage gains, job placement rate, postsecondary attainment and career preparation.

Using wage and demand data, we are making targeted state investments in education and training programs that will benefit Hoosiers and businesses who drive our state's economy forward. The [Next Level Jobs programs](#), created in 2017, have made tremendous gains in workforce training directly connected to employment and increasing Hoosiers economic mobility.

- The Workforce Ready Grant is made available to Hoosiers in search of short-term training that is matched to high-wage, high-demand jobs. We combine state and federal funding to offer free training and make it is easy to apply online at NextLevelJobs.org by answering less than ten simple questions.
- The Employer Training Grant is made available to Hoosier employers to train new hires or upskill incumbent workers. By submitting a training plan and expected wage gains, once approved, employers can access up to \$50,000 annually to help offset their training costs.
- Nearly 50,000 Hoosiers trained through the Next Level Jobs programs are seeing annual wage gains of \$6,800 for the Workforce Ready Grant and \$5,900 for the Employer Training Grant.

Our [Next Level Rapid Recovery initiative](#) expanded upon the success of the Next Level Jobs programs to provide more opportunities for those impacted by COVID-19. This program was stood up with an investment of \$75M in CARES funding to quickly address individuals impacted by the pandemic, offering them an opportunity to re-skill or upskill. We also increased the amount of funding available for both the individual and the employer, providing up to \$10,000 for a training program for the individual and up to \$100,000 per employer.

The results speak for themselves. From our June 5, 2020 Rapid Recovery announcement through December 31, 2020:

- 15,618 Hoosiers enrolled in training and 7,994 earned a certificate through the Workforce Ready Grant program.
- In that same timeframe, we had over 1,241 employers and 11,752 individuals participate in the Employer Training Grant program.
- Most significant, is the over 300% increase in minority-, veteran-, and woman-owned businesses that participated in our Employer Training Grant by having a dedicated funding stream to serve such companies.

The road to recovery from the pandemic runs straight through Indiana's Next Level Jobs programs. To date, the program has been funded with state resources while also leveraging Pell funding for our credit-bearing Workforce Ready Grant program.

Expanding Pell eligibility to students in shorter-term, non-credit bearing programs that are employer-driven and provide the opportunities workers need for upskilling and training at the speed of the private sector would be a game-changer in our critical need to greatly expand our workforce initiatives. States can assure the quality of providers accessing such funds by using their Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) criteria established by WIOA and monitoring participant outcomes such as wage gains, job placement rates, and completion rates. One way to help solve our nation's workforce issues is to begin to better integrate postsecondary education and workforce efforts in a more streamlined way. Leveraging the ETPL for Pell eligible individuals is one way to accomplish this.

We would also recommend that the committee include new funding in the reauthorization for state-based programs such as Next Level Jobs. Indiana stands ready to be a model program, measuring impact and results on employment and wage growth in key areas as defined by the state economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit recommendations. I would be pleased to meet to discuss Next Level Jobs and the positive impact it has had on Hoosiers, businesses and our economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric Holloway". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Cc: Indiana Congressional Delegation