WASHINGTON, D.C. – Local elected officials, business leaders and workforce investment boards on Wednesday expressed significant concerns over provisions in H.R. 803, the SKILLS Act to members of Congress. The letter was sent to House Speaker John Boehner, Majority Leader Eric Cantor, Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, and Minority Whip Steny Hoyer by the United States Conference of Mayors (USCM), the National Association of Counties (NACo), the National League of Cities (NLC) and the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB). The groups opposed provisions in H.R. 803 which undermine the important role of local stakeholders in the administration of workforce development activities and reduce access to education and training for our nation’s most vulnerable workers. The groups called on Congress to enact a bi-partisan workforce development bill this year.

The following is from the joint letter.

“We cannot, however, support reauthorization that fails to secure the delicate governing balance currently crafted in WIA. Furthermore, we cannot support efforts which may reduce access to education and training for our nation’s most vulnerable workers by eliminating designated funding for disconnected youth, and permitting the use of critical WIA funding for purposes other than workforce development activities.

“America’s counties, cities and towns have the potential to be the engines of full national economic recovery and growth, and there is nothing more important to local elected officials, business leaders and workforce investment boards than building successful business-led workforce systems to support the individuals in our communities develop the necessary skills for the jobs of the future. As such, we look forward to working with you to ensure that any final WIA reauthorization bill sustains a balanced approach that fully reflects local and regional economies, and is truly responsive to the needs of our communities, citizens, businesses and industries.

“We strongly support enactment of a bi-partisan workforce development bill that is responsive to
emerging economic realities and business needs. The reauthorization of WIA is essential for preservation of critical workforce development funding, and a most important investment in our nation’s economic future. However, we are unable to support H.R. 803 until Congress is able to address these significant concerns.”

The National League of Cities is dedicated to helping city leaders build better communities. NLC is a resource and advocate for 19,000 cities, towns and villages, representing more than 218 million Americans.

The National Association of Counties (NACo) is the only national organization that represents county governments in the United States. Founded in 1935, NACo provides essential services to the nation’s 3,069 counties.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are 1,295 such cities in the country today, and each city is represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the mayor.

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