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February 3, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC

AGC KEY VOTE: Vote “YES” on Hill Amendment to H.R. 447, the National Apprenticeship Act of 2021

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy:

On behalf of the Associated General Contractors of America (AGC), I write to urge you to support the Rep. French Hill Amendment to H.R. 447 which would simply clarify that all registered apprenticeship programs are eligible for grants under the National Apprenticeship Act of 2021. Despite the pandemic, the construction industry continues to experience a skilled worker shortage and anticipates that persisting in the future. **As such, AGC urges a “YES” vote on this amendment and reserves the right to record your vote as a KEY VOTE for the education of our more than 27,000 member firms.**

Workforce development has historically been a bipartisan issue. And H.R. 447 is well intentioned in seeking to expand apprenticeship opportunities and address the skilled worker shortage. The bill elevates and prioritizes the role apprenticeships can play, provides incentives for states to assist employers and offers technical assistance in the development of programs. Although the bill would provide new and significant funding increases for apprenticeship programs, the ability to fully capitalize on opportunities under Title II of the bill would be put into jeopardy and many registered apprenticeship programs would be ineligible to qualify.

The Rep. Hill Amendment addresses the inequities in the bill by clarifying that all registered apprenticeship programs would be eligible for grants, not just programs partnering with unions to receive taxpayer support. AGC is proud of our contractor members’ support of union-affiliated joint apprenticeship training programs, but we believe all bona fide and high-quality apprenticeship programs that are registered with the U.S. Department of Labor and are not affiliated with a union program are still important components to addressing the workforce development problem and should also be eligible for Title II grants under H.R. 447.

Using the power of the federal purse to discriminate against any U.S. DOL registered apprenticeship program for the sole reason that they are not partnered with a labor or joint labor-management organization is contrary to the stated goals of the legislation. If a program meets DOL’s rigorous standards for registration, then there’s no valid reason Congress should be restricting tools to upskill and train Americans as the economy and industry emerge from the global pandemic.

Again, AGC urges a YES vote on Hill Amendment and looks forward to working with Congress on practicable solutions to our nation’s workforce needs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'James V. Christianson'.

James V. Christianson