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The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

**ARSA Urges Strong Support for the Strengthening Career and Technical Education
for the 21st Century Act (H.R. 5587)**

Dear Speaker Ryan and Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of the Aeronautical Repair Station Association (ARSA), the international trade association representing aviation design, maintenance and manufacturing companies, I urge your strong support and swift approval of the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (H.R. 5587).

H.R. 5587, which was unanimously approved by the House Education and the Workforce Committee, enhances, reforms and reauthorizes the Carl D. Perkins Act. The proposal is a significant step to addressing one of the most pressing challenges facing American businesses: the skilled worker shortage

In the United States, the aviation maintenance industry employs more than 273,000 workers and generates \$43 billion in economic activity across all 50 states. Unfortunately, the maintenance sector is staring down a workforce crisis, hindering economic growth and competitiveness. Employers face increasing pressure to fill gaps created by retiring workers and meet expanding market demands, even while already struggling to find workers with needed technical skills.

In 2014, ARSA and the Aviation Technician Education Council (ATEC) commissioned a report by researchers at the College of William & Mary examining the technical worker shortage facing the aviation industry. The study, *Policy Solutions for a Stronger Technical Workforce*, found that expanding global markets and increased demand for a highly skilled, government-certificated labor force, aviation businesses must overcome the looming retirements of more experienced employees, skill gaps and regulatory restrictions on training programs. In the face of these obstacles, the researchers recommended companies and interest groups build strategic partnerships on local and regional levels between employers, educational institutions and community and government organizations.

H.R. 5587 is a significant step toward addressing the skilled worker shortage by reinforcing career and technical education (CTE) programs and allowing educators and their partners in the business community to improve student outcomes and provide the skills required to be successful in the workforce (or continued education). The legislation focuses on areas where improvements can be made to current law, building upon past successes and enhancing aspects of the long-overdue-for-reauthorization Perkins Act in order to better serve both workers and employers, by:

- Aligning CTE programs to the needs of the regional, state and local labor markets.
- Supporting effective and meaningful collaboration between secondary and postsecondary institutions and employers.
- Increasing student participation in work-based learning opportunities.
- Promoting the use of industry recognized credentials and other recognized post-secondary credentials.

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These improvements will more effectively spend federal dollars to help our nation's students acquire the skills that they need and employers – including ARSA members – are demanding.

Simply put, by making technical education a priority, Congress can help better prepare workers for well-paying careers, ensure that U.S. companies are able to seize new business opportunities and make the United States more competitive in the global economy. Businesses, schools and government officials must collectively commit to tackling the technical education crisis at all levels, and you can take a great step towards enabling that commitment by supporting and swiftly passing H.R. 5587.

On behalf of ARSA and its members, I applaud the ongoing bipartisan commitment to invest in our nation's students, workers and economy through the Perkins CTE program. We look forward to working together to build the nation's technical workforce.

Sincerely,



Daniel B. Fisher
Vice President of Legislative Affairs