



July 17, 2017

The White House  
Executive Office of the President  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

**Subject: The Society for Maintenance & Reliability Professionals Support for Workforce Development Initiatives**

Dear Mr. President:

We, the Society for Maintenance & Reliability Professionals (SMRP) comprised of over 6,000 members, like many in the manufacturing community across the United States, are experiencing technical skilled labor shortages that will impact our ability to remain competitive in global markets.

Today, we write in support of the Presidential Executive Order 13801 "Expanding Apprenticeships in America" and ask that the certifications, partnerships, and programs established by SMRP be reviewed by the Administration as indicated in the Executive Order to expand apprenticeships and reform ineffective education practices and workforce development programs.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, we respectfully urge you to encourage Senate Leadership to pass the bipartisan legislation: Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (H.R. 2353), a bill to reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins).

In order to close the skills gap and expand workforce development opportunities, we know that it will take congressional and executive action. Therefore, we are writing to express our concern for the President's Fiscal Year 2018 proposed budget, which calls for a 15-percent cut to Perkins Basic State Grant and a 40-percent cut to the Department of Labor's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs.

### **I. About SMRP**

SMRP is a professional society formed to develop and promote excellence in the maintenance, reliability, and physical asset management industry. Maintenance and reliability jobs are skilled positions that provide competitive advantages to the companies that employ them. SMRP members consist of engineers, operations managers, repair and reliability technicians, worksite and project planners, and other service providers. Our members are experts in maintenance, reliability, and physical asset management, representing industries that are reliant on the abilities of highly skilled American workers.

### **II. Technical Skilled Worker Shortage**

Technology and globalization has created a dramatic shift in the labor market. We believe that the United States has failed to adapt accordingly, leading to an economically-devastating skilled worker shortage. As recognized by Ms. Ivanka Trump, there are six million American jobs available, and many are highly-skilled positions in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). As a result, American manufacturing is suffering. SMRP members are experiencing this directly and are unable to grow their businesses because they cannot find workers with the education or training required to fill open jobs.

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<sup>1</sup> Trump, President Donald J. (June 15, 2017). Presidential Executive Order Expanding Apprenticeships in America [The White House Office of the Press Secretary Release]. Retrieved from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/06/15/presidential-executive-order-expanding-apprenticeships-america>

Developing a skilled workforce is critical to driving the maintenance, reliability and physical asset management profession forward. As it stands, there are neither enough funds provided to high schools, trade schools, and colleges to produce the resources to replace an aging workforce nor enough incentives to assist companies and local governments with collaborative training of the future workforce. Workforce development is a priority for SMRP as we work to be a resource in efforts to bridge the skills gap and promote the importance of effective workforce development programs.

### **III. How SMRP Is Working to Mitigate the Technical Skilled Worker Shortage**

SMRP is working to develop and promote excellence within the workforce for the in-demand skills that are needed to fill open jobs. As of now, SMRP has developed certifications, partnerships, and programs to accomplish this goal. We have outlined how these efforts below support directives within the Executive Order, “Expanding Apprenticeships in America:”

- **Section 4. Establishing Industry-Recognized Apprenticeships**  
SMRP has partnered with the Reliability and Maintainability Center (RMC) at the University of Tennessee to support their mission to advance education and practices of reliability and maintainability within both the academic and industrial communities. The RMC is business-focused and recognized as the premier program for reliability and maintainability students and professional development. Thereby when businesses hire employees that use RMC’s processes and programs, the end result is improved operations that save money and time. SMRP believes strongly that to bridge the technical skills gap; we need more programs like RMC.
- **Section 5. Funding to Promote Apprenticeships**  
In order to ensure the next generation has access to such apprenticeship programs, the SMRP Foundation awards multiple scholarships each year to students pursuing degrees related to maintenance, reliability, and physical asset management. These students then receive apprenticeships and are able to fill the open jobs - allowing American manufacturing and industrial businesses to become more competitive globally.
- **Section 7. Promoting Apprenticeship Programs at Colleges and Universities**  
SMRP member employers have partnered with their local technical schools, and community colleges to co-develop industry specific training programs. These partnerships are providing the employers with the skilled workers needed to remain competitive, fill jobs and grow their businesses.

Since 2008, the Mosaic Company has had an ongoing collaboration with Polk State College’s Advanced Manufacturing Institute (PSC-AMI) to provide education and training to their local workforce. Their apprenticeship program provides students with two years of classroom studies in combination with on-the-job training with advanced curriculum for Mechanical and Electrical/Instrumentation/Automation (E/I/A) Technicians. Together the PSC-AMI and Mosaic leaders and employees built a successful program that has been recognized by the National Council for Continuing Education & Training.

- **Section 10. Improving the Effectiveness of Workforce Development Programs**  
SMRP knows the difference a globally-recognized certification can make for professionals in their development and career path. For over ten years, SMRP and its certification organization, SMRPCO,

have offered world-leading certification programs for maintenance, reliability and physical asset management professionals. These certification programs provide a unique skill set by going beyond textbook knowledge and testing real-world experiences and abilities. Colleges have utilized both the society's CMRP<sup>2</sup> and CMRT<sup>3</sup> credentials to identify student completion of key competency benchmarks. More information on the certification programs can be found on the SMRP [website](#).

#### **IV. The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act**

While SMRP and our members are partnering with schools, providing scholarships, and certifications, we are also very active on Capitol Hill to ensure that lawmakers are taking a hard look at this serious issue. We ask that you review and urge the Senate Leadership to continue this bipartisan effort to pass the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins).

As emphasized by Ms. Ivanka Trump this bipartisan legislation promotes a “skills-based education and making sure people have the technical skills to succeed in this modern economy.”<sup>4</sup> This legislation reauthorizes the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act through Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 which works to provide students with secondary and post-secondary educational programs that directly correlate with business and industry standards.

“Apprenticeships and career education are vital to closing the skill gap, growing our economy, and giving every student the chance to succeed,” said Representative Raja Krishnamoorthi, sponsor of the legislation, and discussed with SMRP that “the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act will do exactly that by modernizing these programs and increasing cooperation with employers. Investing in CTE programs and linking classroom education with in-demand career skills will help students, businesses, and our economy as a whole.”

SMRP members support this legislation because it provides strategic funding to high schools, trade schools, and colleges that produce the resources to replace an aging workforce, and delivers incentives to assist companies and local governments with collaborative training of the future workforce. SMRP encourages you to take a serious look at this policy proposal as it would contribute to achieving the goal of five million apprenticeships in five years.

#### **VI. Recommendations for the President**

Mr. President, these are some of the efforts that SMRP and its members are doing to bridge the technical skills shortage, and we remain committed to working with your administration to ensure that the next generation of the American workforce has access to apprenticeships and work-based learning opportunities.

The fact remains that many companies are struggling to find a younger, technically skilled workforce to fulfill the need for maintenance and reliability professionals. Investing in job training is an investment for the individual, the economy, and American businesses. We implore you to consider the importance of federal

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<sup>2</sup> The Certified Maintenance & Reliability Professional (CMRP) program is the number one leading credentialing program for certifying the knowledge, skills, and abilities of maintenance and reliability professionals regardless of education background or work experience.

<sup>3</sup> The Certified Maintenance & Reliability Technician (CMRT) program is the number one credentialing program for the knowledge, skills, and abilities of maintenance and reliability technicians.

<sup>4</sup> Soergel, A. (June 15, 2017). Trump Unveils Apprenticeship Overhaul. Retrieved from <http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2017-06-12/donald-trump-to-tout-training-apprenticeships-in-workforce-development-week>



support for investment in career and technical education in your Fiscal Year 2018 budget. Specifically, we ask you to consider the impact a \$168 million cut in the Perkins Basic State Grant would have on our members, their companies as well as millions of others who depend on education and workforce training programs.

We advocate for your support of the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act as it is an investment in our nation's future. Our hope is that you will support strengthening apprenticeship and work-based learning opportunities and urge lawmakers to use federal resources to stimulate, incentivize and build the American workforce.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chelsea A. Ritchie".

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