



DAVID A. RAYMOND
PRESIDENT & CEO

July 25, 2013

The Honorable John Kline
Chairman
Committee on Education
and the Workforce
2181 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable George Miller
Senior Democratic Member
Committee on Education
and the Workforce
2181 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Higher Education
and Workforce Training
2181 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ruben Hinojosa
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Higher Education
and Workforce Training
2181 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kline, Senior Democratic Member Miller, Chairwoman Foxx, and
Ranking Member Hinojosa:

The American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) – the business association of the nation’s engineering industry – is pleased to submit comments to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce on the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA).

ACEC members – numbering more than 5,000 firms representing hundreds of thousands of engineers and other specialists throughout the country – are engaged in a wide range of engineering works that propel the nation’s economy, and enhance and safeguard America’s quality of life. The Council represents engineering businesses of all sizes, from the single professional engineer to firms that employ tens of thousands of professionals working in the United States and throughout the world.

One of the concerns shared by our member firms is the growing shortage of engineers. Although engineers are in demand now more than ever, our nation’s universities are not keeping up with the need for new engineering graduates. Bachelor’s degrees in engineering have declined by nearly 20 percent since 1985. The engineering workforce is also getting older: nearly 30 percent of all engineering and science degree holders in the labor force are 50 or over and are expected to retire in the next 15 years.

The last reauthorization of the HEA in 2008 included a new program that seeks to address labor shortages in engineering and other “high need” professions. Section 428K

(20 U.S.C. 1078-11) provides that an individual will be eligible for up to \$2,000 in student loan forgiveness for each of five years of work in engineering or other designated fields. The maximum amount of loan forgiveness available to an individual will be \$10,000. The program has not yet received funding, and ACEC respectfully requests that the Committee include Section 428K in the upcoming reauthorization of the HEA, and make the funding and implementation of this provision a priority.

A growing economy depends on engineering talent, and therefore reversing the declining trend in engineering graduates is critical to the nation's future economic security. There are indications that the economy is beginning to strengthen following the recession, and ACEC member firms have begun to report again that they are having difficulty finding experienced, skilled engineers.

The National Science Foundation's Science and Engineering Indicators 2012 explains the dynamic: "As economies become more knowledge-intensive, S&E skills will be needed in jobs not traditionally considered part of the S&E workforce, such as manager, sales representatives, and financial analysts." In other words, individuals who graduate with engineering degrees are sought after by many different types of employers.

Once again, on behalf of the nation's engineering industry, we thank the House Committee on Education and the Workforce for the opportunity to submit comments on reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David A. B. [unclear]", written in a cursive style.