Memo to: Scott Cheney, Senate HELP Committee  
From: Andrew Reamer  
Re: Comments on WIA reauthorization, Section 409  
Date: June 20, 2011

In general, I appreciate the expansion of the scope of this section from employment statistics to workforce and labor market information, the inclusion of users in an advisory council, and more workable planning system. I make the following suggestions to strengthen the principles that appeared to guide the first draft of section 409.

1) Section (a)

I strongly encourage the HELP Committee to define the boundaries of the workforce and labor market information system as including non-statistical information as well as the statistical data currently identified. I would put greater emphasis on the role of the workforce and LMI system on informing the decisions of labor market participants (workers, students, educators, employers) and include a more explicit connection between workforce and education. Thus, I would like to see included: O*NET, decision tools like MyskillsMyfuture, resources such as Career One-Stop and training exchange, and career management tools (such as now being carried out for health care on an experimental basis, with ARRA funds). I also would make explicit the value of the system for regional economic development.

Specific suggestions

- Reverse subsections (A) and (B) so that the criteria for the system’s content is laid out first, followed by the content itself

- In relettered subsection (A),
  - rewrite the opening to say “information and data on occupations, skills, and jobs at the national, State, and local levels, which”
  - subsection (A)(ii), I recommend modifying subsection (e)(2) to add required consultation with education and training institutions, economic development organizations, and employers

- In relettered subsection (B),
  - in (B)(iii), remove the stray comma after “by”
  - insert a new (iv) “the relationship between educational attainment and employment conditions and outcomes”
amend the new (v) to say “employment and earnings information maintained in a longitudinal manner to be used for research and program evaluation and for web-based decision tools for use by labor market participants;”

- The point here is that, unlike in 1998, longitudinal data can be made available to students, workers, educators, and employers through web-based tools to help guide career, program, and location decisions

- Insert in a new subsection (C) that says “information on (i) the education, skills, and abilities required by individual occupations, organized in a standardized database, (ii) career options in light of a worker’s current occupation, (iii) education and training programs available to obtain specific degrees, certifications, and skills

- Insert a new subsection (G) “a current, comprehensive, standardized on-line database of occupations;”

- In relettered subsection (H) [old F],
  - (i) “national, State, and local workforce, economic development, and education policymaking”
  - (ii) “implementation of Federal workforce, economic development, and education policies and programs (including allocation formulas)
  - add “(v) workers managing career paths, (vi) education and training institutions deciding the nature and size of program offerings, (vii) businesses making site selections

- In relettered subsection (I) [old G], “wide dissemination of such data, information, and analysis
  - (i) in a user-friendly manner
  - (ii) to the extent possible, in the form of microdata public use files for the purposes of research and program evaluation, while fully protecting confidentiality

2) Section (b)

- (2)(B) “Actively seek the cooperation of heads of other Federal agencies, including, but not limited to, the Department of Commerce and the Department of Education, to establish and maintain mechanisms . . .

Naming the Dept of Education is critical to ensuring the integration of education and workforce data in SLDS.

3) Section (c)

- Having a two-year plan is fine. However, the section does not provide guidance on the process for updating the plan (is it updated every two years or every year as a rolling two-year plan?)
and for evaluating DOL’s plan implementation. Also, I suggest making clear if the two years should be based on fiscal or calendar years.

- (c)(5) “a description of the written recommendations received from the Workforce Information Advisory Council . . . , and the extent to which those recommendations . . . , and the reasons why any recommendations were not adopted.”

4) Section (d)

I would like to see broader representation on the Advisory Council so that DOL works more closely with other agencies (Education, Commerce) and so that users of the workforce and LMI system are fully represented.

- In subsection (d)(1), “. . . and how the Department of Labor and the States . . . , and how the Department of Labor will work with the Departments of Education and Commerce in building the workforce and labor market information system”

- I encourage the addition of four ex officio members of Council, two each from Education and Commerce, and within each department one from a statistical agency (NCES, Census) and one from a program agency or division (e.g., EDA, Under Secretary for postsecondary)

- I suggest adding to the council representatives from education, one each from K-12 education agencies, community colleges, and universities

5) Section (e)

As noted above, I think the required consultations in (e)(2)(A) and (B) should be expanded to include education and training institutions, economic development agencies (which are represented on the Council), and employers.