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March 21, 2011

The Honorable Buck McKeon of California
United States House of Representatives
2184 Rayburn HOB
Washington DC 20510

Dear Congressman McKeon:

As you know, the House Appropriations Committee introduced H.R.1, the Fiscal Year 2011 Continuing Resolution (CR). If passed this bill would eliminate all funding, over \$3.6 billion, for the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) in Program Year 2011 and a \$175 million rescission of Prior Year funds. Beginning in July 1 of this year, these cuts would zero out all new funding for state and local programs under WIA – programs that have made a substantial positive impact to employers, job seekers and their families. The CR being proposed by Congressional Republicans will cut off a valuable lifeline that is providing critical workforce training programs and business support.

It appears that the House Appropriations Committee is taking the position that workforce development and job-training programs are not effective, and therefore are expendable in this challenging and unprecedented budget climate in Washington. On behalf of San Luis Obispo's business community, we disagree.

Since the start of the intense recession that our region and our county are still grappling with government-funded employment and training programs have provided training, placement, services and support to 17,232 residents. With an unemployment rate that remains about 9% nationally and 9.7% locally, we can hardly afford to turn our backs on our friends and neighbors (and your constituents) at this time.

In addition to providing valuable services to our residents, it is the support to our businesses and regional economic development efforts that will suffer the most through the loss of WIA programs and services. The SLO One-Stops funded through the Workforce Investment Act, has become a critical partner in our region's economic development efforts. From directly supporting our efforts to recruit new businesses to the region by offering access to skilled workers and monetary employment and training incentives, to saving money for local businesses as they begin to rehire new employees, to supporting businesses that are closing or downsizing to ensure that they and their employees have guidance, information and services, our local workforce development system saves our business community money and contributes to our region's economic growth and prosperity.

A critical component to all economic development efforts is a skilled and productive workforce. To take away the funding that ensures our local works have the training and retraining needed to meet the ever-changing demands of the business community jeopardizes our competitiveness and limits the support we can provide to small and large businesses throughout the region.

We commend Congressional efforts to reduce the massive budget deficit that has a stranglehold on our country but we also know that it is the intent of Congress to simultaneously stimulate job growth as well. With this in mind, we urge you to reconsider the elimination of funding for the WIA system and continuing to support all programs and services that directly create jobs, support businesses and enhance economic growth.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Your Name

Enclosure