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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6300

August 8, 2007

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
131 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Arlen Specter
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations
Subcommittee of Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
131 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Specter:

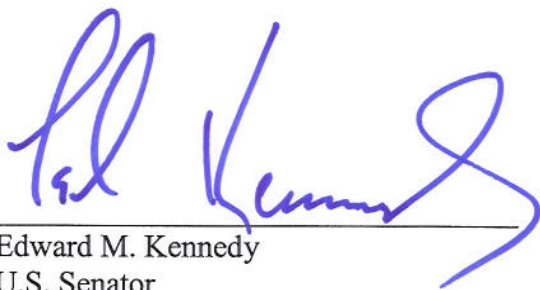
As you know, last month the House passed its version of the FY2008 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, which unfortunately includes a \$335 million rescission of "unspent" Workforce Investment Act funds. We are writing to urge you to reject any attempt to add this misguided language during floor consideration of the Senate bill.

For several years, the Bush Administration and the Department of Labor have sought to decimate funding for these job training programs by falsely arguing that states are not spending funds directly appropriated to them. However, under current law, states have up to three years to spend their allocated funds, and states typically obligate funds to support training programs over this three-year time frame. Therefore, despite the Administration's claims that these funds are not being spent, they are being dedicated to support vital job training programs in future years.

In fact, in a recent study, the National Association of State Workforce Agencies found that states spend *all but one-tenth of one percent* of their allocated funds on workforce development services during the three-year spending cycle allowed by law. The rescission provision in the House bill would zero out funding in the second year of this spending cycle. In effect, the rescission would change the law, a process that should occur through reauthorization by the Committee of jurisdiction.

A strong workforce development system is essential to keeping America competitive. In our two states, thousands of workers of all ages are on waiting lists for training, and employers are desperately seeking skilled workers to fill jobs. We should be doing more, not less, to meet these needs. Reducing critical funding for vital workforce training by rescinding funds that states have dedicated to support job training programs is wrong. We respectfully urge you to reject this unwarranted and counterproductive rescission.

With respect and appreciation,



Edward M. Kennedy
U.S. Senator
Chairman, Senate HELP Committee



Patty Murray
U.S. Senator
Chairman, Senate HELP Subcommittee on
Employment and Workplace Safety