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June 3, 2026

The Honorable David Valadao
U.S. House of Representatives
2465 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Local Workforce Investment in Kern, Inyo, and Mono Counties and the FY2027 Labor-HHS Appropriations Bill

Dear Representative Valadao,

I am writing on behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors to share information about the federally funded workforce system in Kern, Inyo, and Mono Counties and how decisions in the FY2027 appropriations process would affect the people and employers we serve. The Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee is scheduled to mark up the FY2027 bill on June 5, with full Committee consideration to follow on June 9. This letter is intended to inform your understanding of conditions on the ground in your district. We are not asking you to take a position on any specific amendment; we want you to have accurate local information as the Committee does its work.

The Kern, Inyo, and Mono Counties Workforce Development Board oversees the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I system, operating the America's Job Centers of California that connect residents to employment, skills training, and support services, and that help local employers in agriculture, energy, healthcare, and logistics find and develop the workers they need. We serve job seekers who face real barriers to stable employment, including dislocated workers, low-income adults, veterans, people re-entering the workforce, and young people making the transition from school to work.

For the current program year (PY2025-26), Kern, Inyo, and Mono Counties received roughly \$18.9 million in WIOA Title I formula funds: \$6.8 million for the Adult program, \$5.3 million for the Dislocated Worker program, and \$6.8 million for the Youth program. The funds pay for the career staff, training contracts, and one-stop centers that residents and businesses in your district rely on every week.

At the same time, federal law has substantially increased the demand on this system. H.R. 1 expanded SNAP work requirements, effective November 1, 2025, to adults through age 64 and to parents of school-age children, and it established Medicaid community-engagement requirements that take effect January 1, 2027. Nationally, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that roughly 8.8 million people are newly subject to the SNAP requirements and 18.5 million Medicaid enrollees will be subject to the new

community-engagement rules. Most of these individuals are already working. The available evidence indicates that about 74% of work-age SNAP participants work over the course of a year and roughly 64% of Medicaid adults are employed. The practical challenge for our constituents is documentation, verification, and connection to qualifying activities.

These mandates land directly in your district. District-level estimates compiled from U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) data (and calibrated to the CBO national totals) indicate that in CA-22, approximately 32,000 residents are now subject to the expanded SNAP work requirements and roughly 90,000 Medicaid expansion enrollees will be subject to the community-engagement requirements that begin in January. The district's poverty rate is just under 23%, and an estimated 28,000 workers are employed in occupations highly exposed to AI and automation. The local workforce development system is positioned to help these residents document compliance, keep their health and food assistance, and connect to employment, while supplying local employers with the workers they need. That demand is arriving in Kern, Inyo, and Mono Counties now, without any additional WIOA funding to meet it.

It is worth placing this moment in a longer context. The WIOA Adult appropriation has been essentially flat in nominal terms for a decade, rising only from about \$817 million in FY2016 to \$875 million in FY2026, a level that has not kept pace with inflation. The decline is starker over the longer run. Federal investment in workforce development peaked in 1979 and has fallen by more than three-quarters in real terms since. This decline comes even as the national labor force has grown by roughly 61%. Measured per worker, federal workforce spending has fallen from around \$210 in 1979 to roughly \$30 today in constant dollars. The system has been asked to do more with steadily less for many years.

The funding levels the House most recently advanced show what is at stake, and the way WIOA is funded makes the proposal more severe than a single percentage suggests. WIOA Adult grants reach a local area in two installments each year: a smaller base installment available July 1 and a larger installment available the following October 1. In its FY2026 Labor-HHS bill (H.R. 5304), the House Appropriations Committee proposed:

- Elimination of the WIOA Youth Activities formula program (the roughly \$948 million stream the Senate bill preserved);
- To fund the Adult program at \$712 million and provide only the October installment, eliminating the July base installment;
- To rescind an additional \$712 million from WIOA funds already made available on October 1, 2025 under the current continuing resolution (Public Law 119-4), an amount equal to a full year's national Adult advance.
- Dislocated Worker funding was held essentially level.

Those FY2026 levels were not ultimately enacted, but they are the most recent expression of the House's funding intentions for this system and could reappear in the FY2027 bill now before the Committee.

For Kern, Inyo, and Mono Counties, the stakes are concrete. Eliminating the Youth program would remove the entire \$6.8 million Youth allocation. The Adult program reaches the area in two installments this year, about \$1.3 million in the July base and \$5.4 million in the October advance. Eliminating the base installment going forward, together with a rescission equal to the advance, would place nearly the entire \$6.8 million Adult allocation at risk across the transition. With Dislocated Worker funding left essentially level, the proposal puts roughly \$13.6 million of the area's total \$18.9 million in WIOA Title I funding in jeopardy.

These dollars are people. In PY2024-25, Kern, Inyo, and Mono Counties served about 894 adults and 553 young people through these programs. Eliminating the Youth program would end services for all 553 of those young people. Cutting the Adult program would sharply curtail the area's capacity to serve the 894 adults who rely on it. Eliminating the base installment alone removes the capacity to serve roughly 174 adults each year, and a rescission of the advance installment would disrupt services for far more, at the very moment the new SNAP and Medicaid work requirements are driving local demand higher.

As you and your colleagues consider the FY2027 Labor-HHS bill, the Kern County Board of Supervisors respectfully asks that you keep these local impacts in mind and continue to support sustained federal investment in the WIOA Title I programs that serve Kern, Inyo, and Mono Counties. We would welcome the chance to host you or a member of your staff at one of our America's Job Centers to see this work firsthand, and we are glad to provide any additional district-level data that would be useful to you.

Thank you for your attention and for your service to the people of Kern, Inyo, and Mono Counties.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Phillip Peters", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Phillip Peters, Chairman
Kern County Board of Supervisors

cc: Kern Congressional Delegation
Kern, Inyo, and Mono Counties Workforce Development Board
California Workforce Association
Townsend Public Affairs