

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 25, 2013

The Honorable Seth D. Harris
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Labor
Frances Perkins Building
200 Constitution Avenue, Northwest
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Acting Secretary Harris:

We are writing regarding the U.S. Department of Labor's oversight and administration of the Job Corps program. We have tremendous concern regarding the Department's decision to suspend all new student enrollments to Job Corps centers. This action will leave thousands of youth without access to the largest residential youth education and training program for disadvantaged youth age 16 to 24. We request immediate justification for the suspension of new enrollments and an accounting of the specific reasons for the ongoing funding shortfall.

As you know, the purpose of Job Corps is to provide disadvantaged youth with the skills needed to obtain and hold a job, enter the Armed Forces, or enroll in advanced training or higher education. In addition to receiving academic and employment training, youth also engage in social skills training and other services to promote their overall well-being. As you well know, Job Corps is a vital piece of our workforce development system and is often the only option for the youth who enroll.

During program year 2011, we were troubled to learn of a \$39 million funding shortfall in the Job Corps operations account. Through a series of immediate and difficult cost-saving measures, and the transfer of funds from other Job Corps and employment and training discretionary accounts, the program year 2011 shortfall was addressed. While concerned about the administration of the program, we were somewhat heartened to learn the Department intended for these emergency actions to have minimal impact on Job Corps students and enrollment.

Recently, we learned the Job Corps operations account shortfall has continued in program year 2012. Our concerns were renewed when the Department informed us that Job Corps student enrollments would be reduced by 2,909 across seven states. Taken on its own, this reduction is an onerous cost saving measure. While we knew this reduction would adversely impact the opportunities for education and career training for our nation's disadvantaged youth, it appeared this action was necessary to address the shortfall. Yet, on Friday, January 18, we were notified that all new enrollments would be suspended at all 125 Job Corps centers until sufficient program savings were achieved. We are deeply troubled and disturbed the shortfall has not only continued in this program year but that the funding gap has increased. It is deeply disconcerting

the Department has failed to identify the specific causes of the budget shortfall, failed to provide detailed justification to Congress of the need to suspend enrollment, and failed to take action to permanently stabilize the financial condition of the program. Having entrusted the Department with \$1.7 billion in each of the fiscal years 2011 and 2012 to serve 120,000 students, we are dismayed by the Department's management of the Job Corps program.

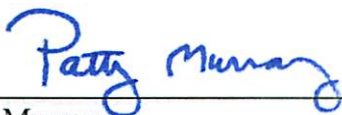
Cost saving measures effecting enrollment harms our nation's disadvantaged youth, our workforce, and our nation's ability to rebuild a competitive economy. All other cost-saving measures ought to be exhausted before implementing measures adversely impacting Job Corps students or youth seeking enrollment in the program. The Office of Job Corps needs your leadership to permanently address the shortfall and to ensure this enrollment freeze is temporary and discontinued as soon as possible.

We request that you immediately provide us with:

1. detailed analysis and identification of the causes of the program year 2011 shortfall;
2. full accounting of the cost savings measures taken to address the program year 2011 shortfall;
3. full accounting of the permanent cost savings measures taken to address the program year 2011 and program year 2012 shortfall, to address fundamental budgetary shortfalls overall, and to improve program performance or management;
4. detailed description and analysis of the causes of the continuing shortfall in program year 2012;
5. full justification of the need to suspend enrollments, and whether reductions in slots or suspension of enrollments is anticipated to continue in program year 2013;
6. full description of every other cost savings option considered by the Department before the final decision to implement the January 28 suspension of enrollments and the justification for not choosing those options; and
7. summary of any and all deliberations taken within the Department, with other entities within the Administration, with contractors and operators, Congress, and other experts.

We request that you provide this information no later than February 7, 2013. If you are unable to address any of these issues, please provide detailed information explaining why the Department is unable to do so. We will continue to closely monitor administration of the Job Corps program and the Department's oversight of Job Corps centers.

Sincerely,



Patty Murray
United States Senator



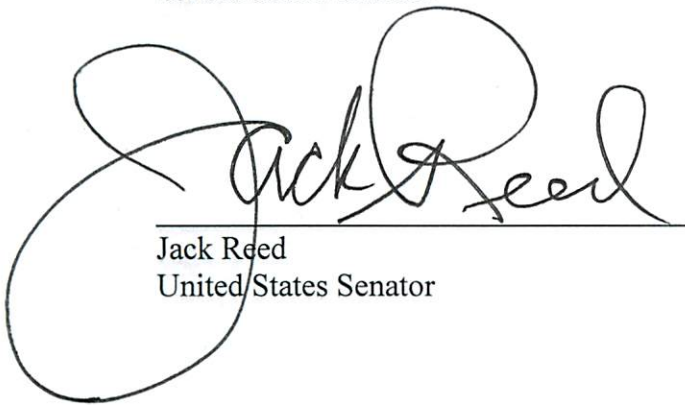
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United States Senator



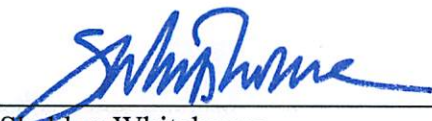
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