

1 Title: To address the workforce needs of the telecommunications industry.

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3
4 Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in
5 Congress assembled,

6 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

7 This Act may be cited as the “Telecommunications Skilled Workforce Act”.

8 SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

9 In this Act:

10 (1) 5G.—The term “5G”, with respect to wireless infrastructure and wireless technology,
11 means fifth-generation wireless infrastructure and wireless technology.

12 (2) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—The term “appropriate congressional
13 committees” means—

14 (A) the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate;

15 (B) the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate;

16 (C) the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives; and

17 (D) the Committee on Education and Labor of the House of Representatives.

18 (3) BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE.—The term “broadband infrastructure” means any
19 buried, underground, or aerial facility, and any wireless or wireline connection, that enables
20 users to send and receive voice, video, data, graphics, or any combination thereof.

21 (4) COMMISSION.—The term “Commission” means the Federal Communications
22 Commission.

23 (5) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—The term “institution of higher education” has
24 the meaning given the term in section 101 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.
25 1001).

26 (6) RURAL AREA.—The term “rural area” means any area other than—

27 (A) a city, town, or incorporated area that has a population of more than 20,000
28 inhabitants; or

29 (B) an urbanized area adjacent to a city or town that has a population of more than
30 50,000 inhabitants.

31 (7) SECRETARY.—Except as otherwise provided, the term “Secretary” means the
32 Secretary of Labor.

33 (8) STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD.—The term “State workforce development
34 board” means a State workforce development board established under section 101 of the
35 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3111).

36 SEC. 3. INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP

EVALUATION.

(a) In General.—Not later than 60 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary, in consultation with the Chairman of the Commission, shall convene an interagency working group to develop recommendations to address the workforce needs of the telecommunications industry.

(b) Duties.—In developing recommendations under subsection (a), the interagency working group shall—

(1) determine whether, and if so how, any Federal laws (including regulations), policies, or practices, or any budgetary constraints, inhibit institutions of higher education or for-profit businesses from establishing, adopting, or expanding programs intended to address the workforce needs of the telecommunications industry, including the workforce needed to build and maintain the 5G wireless infrastructure necessary to support 5G wireless technology;

(2) identify potential policies and programs that could encourage and improve coordination among Federal agencies, between Federal agencies and States, and among States, on telecommunications workforce needs;

(3) identify ways in which existing Federal programs, including programs that help facilitate the employment of veterans and military personnel transitioning into civilian life, could be leveraged to help address the workforce needs of the telecommunications industry;

(4) identify ways to encourage individuals and for-profit businesses to participate in qualified industry-led workforce development programs, including the Telecommunications Industry Registered Apprenticeship Program and other industry-recognized apprenticeship programs;

(5) identify ways to improve recruitment in qualified industry-led workforce development programs, including the Telecommunications Industry Registered Apprenticeship Program and other industry-recognized apprenticeship programs; and

(6) identify Federal incentives that could be provided to institutions of higher education, for-profit businesses, State workforce development boards, or other relevant stakeholders to establish or adopt programs, or expand current programs, to address the workforce needs of the telecommunications industry, including such needs in rural areas.

(c) Members.—The interagency working group convened under subsection (a) shall be composed of representatives of such Federal agencies and relevant non-Federal industry stakeholder organizations as the Secretary considers appropriate, including—

(1) a representative of the Department of Education, appointed by the Secretary of Education;

(2) a representative of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, appointed by the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information;

(3) a representative of the Department of Commerce, appointed by the Secretary of Commerce;

(4) a representative of the Commission, appointed by the Chairman of the Commission;

1 (5) a representative of the Telecommunications Industry Registered Apprenticeship
2 Program, appointed by the Secretary;

3 (6) a representative of a telecommunications industry association, appointed by the
4 Chairman of the Commission;

5 (7) a representative of an Indian Tribe or Tribal organization, appointed by the Secretary;
6 and

7 (8) a representative of a rural telecommunications carrier, appointed by the Secretary.

8 (9) a representative from a labor organization, appointed by the Secretary.

9 (d) Report to Congress.—Not later than 180 days after the date on which the interagency
10 working group is convened under subsection (a), the interagency working group shall submit to
11 the appropriate congressional committees a report containing recommendations to address the
12 workforce needs of the telecommunications industry.

13 (e) Powers.—

14 (1) HEARINGS.—The interagency working group convened under subsection (a) may hold
15 such hearings, sit and act at such times and places, take such testimony, and receive such
16 evidence as the interagency working group considers advisable to carry out the objectives of
17 this section.

18 (2) INFORMATION FROM FEDERAL AGENCIES.—The interagency working group convened
19 under subsection (a) may secure directly from any Federal agency such information as the
20 interagency working group considers necessary to carry out the provisions of this section.
21 Upon request of the interagency working group, the head of such agency shall furnish such
22 information to the interagency working group.

23 (3) POSTAL SERVICES.—The interagency working group convened under subsection (a)
24 may use the United States mails in the same manner and under the same conditions as other
25 Federal agencies.

26 (f) Personnel.—

27 (1) TRAVEL.—The members of the interagency working group convened under
28 subsection (a) shall not receive compensation for the performance of services for the
29 interagency working group, but shall be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu
30 of subsistence, at rates authorized for employees of agencies under subchapter I of chapter
31 57 of title 5, United States Code, while away from their homes or regular places of business
32 in the performance of services for the interagency working group. Notwithstanding section
33 1342 of title 31, United States Code, the interagency working group may accept the
34 voluntary and uncompensated services of members of the interagency working group.

35 (2) DETAIL OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES.—Any employee of the Federal Government
36 may be detailed to the interagency working group convened under subsection (a) without
37 reimbursement, and such detail shall be without interruption or loss of civil service status or
38 privilege.

39 (g) Nonapplicability of FACA.—The Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.) shall
40 not apply to the interagency working group convened under subsection (a).

1 (h) Sunset.—The interagency working group convened under subsection (a) shall terminate on
2 the day after the date on which the interagency working group submits the report to Congress
3 under subsection (d).

4 SEC. 4. TELECOMMUNICATIONS WORKFORCE 5 GUIDANCE.

6 (a) In General.—The Secretary, in consultation with the Chairman of the Commission, shall
7 establish and issue guidance on how States can address the workforce needs of the
8 telecommunications industry, including guidance on how a State workforce development board
9 can—

10 (1) utilize Federal resources available to States to meet the workforce needs of the
11 telecommunications industry; and

12 (2) promote and improve recruitment in qualified industry-led workforce development
13 programs, including the Telecommunications Industry Registered Apprenticeship Program
14 and other industry-recognized apprenticeship programs.

15 SEC. 5. GAO ASSESSMENT OF WORKFORCE NEEDS OF 16 THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY.

17 Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the
18 United States shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report that estimates the
19 number of skilled telecommunications workers that will be required to build and maintain—

20 (1) broadband infrastructure in rural areas; and

21 (2) the 5G wireless infrastructure needed to support 5G wireless technology.
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