



March 13, 2020

Senator John Kennedy  
416 Russell Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Kennedy,

On behalf of the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable (ORR), we write to urge congressional appropriators to include report language in the upcoming Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) appropriations bill that expands the Department of Labor's (DOL) in-demand industries to include those which are critical to restoring economic resiliency to our rural and under-resourced communities, many of which directly support, service, and benefit from the growing outdoor recreation economy. The in-demand industries should include disaster resilience, response and recovery, energy, resource management, transportation and infrastructure (including green infrastructure), and the outdoor recreation economy itself (including manufacturing, retail, guiding, and related services). Doing so can help DOL support Registered Apprenticeships in these fields, expanding career pathways in the outdoor recreation space and supporting a vibrant and essential sector of the economy.

ORR is the nation's leading coalition of outdoor recreation trade associations – now totaling 30 members, representing more than 50,000 American businesses. Together, we represent an industry that makes up 2.2 percent of United States Gross Domestic Product, supports 5.2 million direct American jobs and contributes \$778 billion in economic output, surpassing other sectors such as petroleum, coal, and computer and electronic products.

The proposed industries mentioned above play a major role in supporting a successful outdoor recreation economy. They help to maintain our nation's lands and waterways, enhance outdoor recreation-related infrastructure, increase accessibility to outdoor spaces, and improve the overall outdoor experience. They also help to address serious challenges and barriers to outdoor recreation, including the \$19 billion maintenance backlog on federal lands, as well as our nation's outdated infrastructure through public-private partnerships.

Outdoor recreation is a major driver of U.S. economic success and growing faster than the economy as a whole. With these industries experiencing current and expected workforce shortages, expanding career pathways into these fields is important to supporting work within these industries and to directly supporting the growth of the outdoor recreation economy in communities across the country. We appreciate your support of this sector and thank you for working with us on this issue.

Sincerely,

American Trails  
Archery Trade Association

Association of Marina Industries  
Boat Owners Association of the United States  
The Corps Network  
Marine Retailers Association of the Americas  
National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds  
National Marine Manufacturers Association  
RV Dealers Association  
RV Industry Association  
Specialty Equipment Market Association

### **Proposed Registered Apprenticeship Report Language**

Registered Apprenticeship programs are proven to connect underrepresented, minority, and economically disadvantaged populations to career opportunities, to decrease the current skills gap, and to support the emerging and growing industries that are helping to restore economic vitality and resiliency across America.

To help address the predicted growth and workforce needs of many industries not currently categorized as “in-demand,” connect underrepresented, minority, and economically disadvantaged populations to opportunity, decrease the current skills gap, and expand Registered Apprenticeships to industries not currently utilizing the system, we propose the following report language in a Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill. These changes are not unprecedented. The House recently included the following language expanding “in-demand” industries:

***Current Language from House Labor-HHS FY20 Committee [Report](#):** The Committee supports the use of apprenticeship grants that provide worker education in in-demand fields, including first responder, utility (water), as well as in goods movement sectors such as global logistics, rail and other freight-related employment.*

We propose the following changes to meet the growing workforce demands in the listed industries. In addition, we advocate to expand the Registered Apprenticeship program to industries not currently using or underutilizing this system. Registered apprenticeship is a proven successful model. Expanding it to more industries may address the growing skills gap, address current and future workforce needs, and create economic opportunity and growth.

***Proposed Language:** The Committee supports the use of apprenticeship grants that provide worker education in in-demand and emerging fields, including first responder; disaster resilience, response, and recovery; utility (energy and water) and resource management; transportation and infrastructure (including green infrastructure); goods movement sectors such as global logistics, rail and other freight-related employment; and outdoor recreation economy-related employment. The Committee is expanding in-demand industries to better reflect current and future workforce and economic opportunities and needs. Additionally, the Committee*

*encourages the use of “next-gen” apprenticeship grants to encourage higher education institutions to support registered apprenticeships in emerging and nontraditional industries. This can expand registered apprenticeship to industries and careers that are not currently using or underutilizing this system, deliver transferable, and durable 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and create affordable transfer opportunities to a college education for our youth.*

## **The Need:**

### **Outdoor Recreation Economy Employment**

- The Outdoor Recreation Economy has an annual gross economic output of \$734 billion
- Outdoor recreation generates 4.5 million jobs across a multitude of industries and is growing faster than GDP as a whole
- The Outdoor Recreation Economy is creating new entry points for both our nation’s youth and retirees – especially in manufacturing, retail, and service-sector jobs
- Highly technical and advanced skillsets previously only associated with large consolidated industries are now needed across companies of all sizes
- Due to the growth and steady innovation in this economy, jobs in the outdoor recreation space experience wage growth at a rate larger than average for U.S. jobs

### **Disaster Resilience, Response and Recovery**

- Since 1970, the number of natural disasters has more than quadrupled, impacting 98 billion people and costing more than \$306 billion
- Employment in disaster and emergency management-related positions has doubled since 1990
- Growth in disaster-related positions is expected to be faster than average across all occupations

### **Resource Management**

- The federal lands maintenance backlog totals over \$19 billion
- A majority of the land management workforce is at or past retirement age. Retirement of these individuals will create major need for new workers, and knowledge transfer which apprenticeship programs serve well
- Many land management positions have low barriers to entry and provide significant opportunities for advancement, especially for veterans and service corps alumni

### **Transportation and Infrastructure (including green infrastructure)**

- Our nation’s infrastructure is rated a D+ by the American Society of Civil Engineers and if not improved, will lead to significant economic costs
- Studies show that \$1 billion invested in infrastructure creates 13,000 jobs. A \$2 trillion investment could lead to 26,000,000 jobs
- Experts argue green infrastructure must be included in infrastructure investments to address community needs and public health