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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6350

EMILIA DI SANTO, STAFF DIRECTOR
PATRICIA R. FORBES, DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR AND COUNSEL

August 23, 2000

The Honorable David M. Walker
Comptroller General
of the United States
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Walker:

Please have the General Accounting Office (GAO) review and evaluate the best practices that secondary schools and institutions of higher education, including vocational programs, use to address the urgent need of businesses for skilled workers.

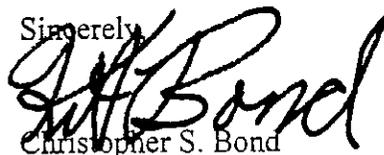
Small businesses in the United States are experiencing increasing difficulty in finding and retaining skilled workers. There are numerous reasons for this shortage. First, qualified job applicants are scarce because the unemployment rate is at a 30 year low. Further, employers seek employees with an ever higher level of technological skills. However, the fundamental cause of the problem is the lack of a well educated workforce. Education success means business success.

Small businesses place a high priority on improving the quality of the skills and education of the workforce. In a recent U.S. Chamber of Commerce poll, 100 Chambers of Commerce stated that their overwhelming concern is finding and attracting qualified workers. Over half of those Chambers also stated that education, including workforce development, is the most pressing public policy issue.

Across the nation, educational and vocational institutions are developing practices and programs to better educate their students and prepare them to enter the workforce. Small businesses often partner with these institutions to develop or sponsor such programs. The Small Business Committee seeks information on the best practices across the country in order to disseminate these ideas and encourage nationwide implementation of the most successful practices.

We request that the GAO report to the Committee on or about September 20, 2001. Please contact David Bohley at 224-5175 if you have any questions regarding this request. Thank you in advance for your assistance in this important matter.

Sincerely,



Christopher S. Bond
Chairman