

10 Things to Know about Workforce Development and the BBB Act

By Molly Bashay

The Build Back Better (BBB) Act is a significant investment that responds to the urgent needs of children and families, people with low incomes, women, and communities of color. This legislation increases funding for our public workforce system and makes a federal down payment on green jobs in the fight against climate change. These investments will bolster the economic security of workers and families, strengthening the nation's overall economy.

Here are the top 10 things you need to know about how the Build Back Better Act supports workforce development.

1. ***This victory responds to workers' needs.*** When the Build Back Better Act becomes law, millions of workers and families will gain new pathways to the good jobs and economic security they need. The Act would increase the U.S. Department of Labor's annual spending on workforce development by 50 percent for each of the next 5 years. This funding will help more people access quality training that leads to good, union, and middle-class jobs.
2. ***Workforce investments will support pathways to good jobs for all.*** Build Back Better renews the federal government's commitment to serving workers and centering economic opportunity for all. The Act's education and workforce investments prioritize disinvested communities, like BIPOC communities and communities with low incomes or high poverty.
3. ***Increases accessibility and affordability of workforce education, training, and degree programs.*** Millions of worker-learners have some postsecondary credit, but not a degree or certificate. New education and workforce grants would help this population re-enroll and complete their education or training, with a priority for improving postsecondary attainment among people with low incomes, BIPOC, students with disabilities, first-generation college students, student parents, and students in need of remediation. In addition, the Act expands eligibility for financial aid programs, including Pell Grants, to undocumented immigrants with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), Temporary Protected Status (TPS), or Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) status, making postsecondary education more affordable.
4. ***Pell Grant increases make postsecondary education and training more affordable for all.*** In addition to expanding eligibility, BBB will increase the maximum federal Pell Grant by \$550 annually, from \$6,495 to \$7,045 as of the 2022-23 award year, for the more than 5 million students enrolled in public and private non-profit institutions, improving affordability for worker-learners with low incomes.
5. ***Historic climate investments, including funding for a green workforce.*** The climate crisis is a real, persistent, and imminent threat disproportionately felt by BIPOC communities and communities with low incomes. Investments in climate mitigation and remediation jobs will address climate change head on while reconnecting people from disinvested communities to paid work. This groundbreaking climate jobs investment will employ over 300,000 people in paid opportunities like apprenticeships and subsidized jobs and prioritize individuals from communities experiencing climate crises as well as the

programs that serve them.

6. ***Paid work opportunities for people impacted by the criminal legal system.*** One in three adults have an arrest or conviction record that creates additional structural barriers too often precluding them from finding quality employment. New investments in the Reentry Employment Opportunities program would create and align high-quality employment opportunities, like subsidized and transitional employment, for people impacted by the criminal legal system.
7. ***Prioritizes youth and young adults, including opportunity youth.*** Youth and young adults are still struggling under the weight of the pandemic and economic downturn. Targeted investments in youth job training and paid work opportunities—plus essential supportive services, better wages, stipends, and benefits for participants—would help blunt the pandemic’s outsized economic shock on young people.
8. ***Doubles down on proven programs like apprenticeship.*** Apprenticeships are highly effective workforce training programs with overwhelming bipartisan support and a long track record of success. Pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships, and Registered Apprenticeships all get a boost in Build Back Better. Plus, the Act specifically outlines funds to aid in creating partnerships with community-based organizations; targeting non-traditional industries and occupations; and prioritizing the participation of people with barriers to employment, including people with disabilities or non-traditional apprenticeship populations like women and BIPOC.
9. ***Supports the care workforce with priority grants.*** These grant funds would support new models to recruit, retrain, and advance the existing care economy workforce; implement new strategies to improve existing jobs; and improve wages and career advancement opportunities. The Act also funds scholarships and loan repayment assistance through the Nurse Corps and National Health Service Corps.
10. ***Enables community colleges to increase CTE and funds sector-based training opportunities with in-demand training.*** Adds funding for community colleges to conduct career and technical education (CTE) and creates grant funds to promote partnerships between workforce entities like community colleges, workforce investment boards, labor unions, employers, and community-based organizations. These funds would help partners align goals, projects, career pathways, and training curricula to create high-quality job and training opportunities with the supports that workers and families need.

Workforce development investments are critical for the economic security of millions of workers, particularly workers earning low wages and workers of color. If passed into law, the Build Back Better Act will invest nearly \$30 billion in our public workforce system.

There is still work to do. Many important programs in the president’s original proposal were dropped during final negotiations. Moving forward, we still want to see a federal commitment to free and accessible high-quality community college for everyone; deeper investments in support services that enable people with low incomes, student parents, and people with criminal legal records to equitably participate in training and get good jobs; and higher wage and program standards that ensure equitable employment outcomes for all.

Our nation’s post-pandemic success hinges on an economic recovery targeting those hit hardest by the COVID downturn and overlooked by the pre-pandemic economy. We applaud the Biden-Harris Administration and Congress for this much-needed foundation of public workforce investments that will provide pathways to economic security for workers and families.