

## Associations establish and lead workforce development programs that support American workers, industries, professions and communities.

Associations live at the intersection of public service and the U.S. economy. They are the **primary source of post-college education and training programs**. They administer professional, expertise-driven certifications that promote market competition, support career growth and build equity in the workforce by reducing gender and race wage gaps.

**Professional certifications provide pathways to opportunity and career growth** in many different fields and support entry level jobs, mid-career professionals and specialized knowledge in complex sectors.

**The American Society of Association Executives** supports policies that promote professional certification, which benefit workers, industries, professions, our economy and the American consumer.

### Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act (H.R. 2171 / S. 905)

The **bipartisan, bicameral Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act** would expand eligible uses of tax-favorable "529" savings plans to **cover costs associated with workforce training and credentialing programs**. The legislation would also enable 529 plan beneficiaries to use their funds to pay for examinations necessary to **obtain and maintain recognized private professional certifications** and other credentials. Only costs related to attending colleges, universities, vocational schools, registered apprenticeship programs, K-12 private tuition or other post-secondary institutions are eligible 529 expenses.

### Resources and Education to Build (REBUILD) Skills Act (bill # TBD)

The **REBUILD Skills Act** would create a federally funded **Career Rebuilding Scholarship Fund**, administered by **approved certification organizations and worker training programs**, to distribute scholarships to eligible individuals who incur covered expenses to take certification exams or enrolling in a training program. Funds would cover **up to the lesser of 95% or \$3,000** of a program.

This bill would also create a federal directory of approved, legitimate training and certification programs that could **benefit all American workers** and not just individuals eligible for scholarships.

Eligible individuals include:

- Any workers displaced from their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Military members who rolled out/are rolling out of service during the pandemic; and
- Spouses of military members who rolled out/are rolling out of service.

### Certifications Promote Opportunity and Help Build Equity

According to a [2017 Working Paper](#) from the Human Capital and Economic Opportunity Global Working Group of the University of Chicago, **certification reduces the racial wage gap among men by 43% and the gender wage gap between women and white men by 36%-40%.**