

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1032

To address the workforce needs of the telecommunications industry.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 11, 2021

Mr. WALBERG (for himself and Ms. CLARKE of New York) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Education and Labor, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To address the workforce needs of the telecommunications industry.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

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

1 **SEC. 2. TELECOMMUNICATIONS INTERAGENCY WORKING**
2 **GROUP.**

3 (a) IN GENERAL.—Part I of title III of the Commu-
4 nications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 301 et seq.) is amended
5 by adding at the end the following:

6 **“SEC. 344. TELECOMMUNICATIONS INTERAGENCY WORK-**
7 **ING GROUP.**

8 “(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

9 “(1) 5G.—The term ‘5G’, with respect to wire-
10 less infrastructure and wireless technology, means
11 fifth-generation wireless infrastructure and wireless
12 technology.

13 “(2) RURAL AREA.—The term ‘rural area’
14 means any area other than—

15 “(A) a city, town, or incorporated area
16 that has a population of more than 20,000 in-
17 habitants; or

18 “(B) an urbanized area adjacent to a city
19 or town that has a population of more than
20 50,000 inhabitants.

21 “(3) TELECOMMUNICATIONS INTERAGENCY
22 WORKING GROUP.—The term ‘telecommunications
23 interagency working group’ means the interagency
24 working group established under subsection (b).

25 “(b) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 60 days after
26 the date of enactment of this section, the Chairman of

1 the Commission, in consultation with the Secretary of
2 Labor, shall establish within the Commission an inter-
3 agency working group to develop recommendations to ad-
4 dress the workforce needs of the telecommunications in-
5 dustry.

6 “(c) DUTIES.—In developing recommendations under
7 subsection (b), the telecommunications interagency work-
8 ing group shall—

9 “(1) determine whether, and if so how, any
10 Federal laws (including regulations), guidance, poli-
11 cies, or practices, or any budgetary constraints, in-
12 hibit institutions of higher education (as defined in
13 section 101 of the Higher Education Act of 1965
14 (20 U.S.C. 1001)) or for-profit businesses from es-
15 tablishing, adopting, or expanding programs in-
16 tended to address the workforce needs of the tele-
17 communications industry, including the workforce
18 needed to build and maintain the 5G wireless infra-
19 structure necessary to support 5G wireless tech-
20 nology;

21 “(2) identify potential policies and programs
22 that could encourage and improve coordination
23 among Federal agencies, between Federal agencies
24 and States, and among States, on telecommuni-
25 cations workforce needs;

1 “(3) identify ways in which existing Federal
2 programs, including programs that help facilitate the
3 employment of veterans and military personnel
4 transitioning into civilian life, could be leveraged to
5 help address the workforce needs of the tele-
6 communications industry;

7 “(4) identify ways to encourage individuals and
8 for-profit businesses to participate in qualified in-
9 dustry-led workforce development programs, includ-
10 ing the Telecommunications Industry Registered Ap-
11 prenticeship Program;

12 “(5) identify ways to improve recruitment in
13 qualified industry-led workforce development pro-
14 grams, including the Telecommunications Industry
15 Registered Apprenticeship Program and other indus-
16 try-recognized apprenticeship programs; and

17 “(6) identify Federal incentives that could be
18 provided to institutions of higher education, for-prof-
19 it businesses, State workforce development boards
20 established under section 101 of the Workforce In-
21 novation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3111), or
22 other relevant stakeholders to establish or adopt pro-
23 grams, or expand current programs, to address the
24 workforce needs of the telecommunications industry,
25 including such needs in rural areas.

1 “(d) MEMBERS.—The telecommunications inter-
2 agency working group shall be composed of representatives
3 of such Federal agencies and relevant non-Federal indus-
4 try stakeholder organizations as the Chairman of the
5 Commission, in consultation with the Secretary of Labor,
6 considers appropriate, including—

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

9 “(2) a representative of the National Tele-
10 communications and Information Administration,
11 appointed by the Assistant Secretary of Commerce
12 for Communications and Information;

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

15 “(4) a representative of the Commission, ap-
16 pointed by the Chairman of the Commission;

17 “(5) a representative of the Telecommuni-
18 cations Industry Registered Apprenticeship Pro-
19 gram, appointed by the Secretary of Labor;

20 “(6) a representative of a telecommunications
21 industry association, appointed by the Chairman of
22 the Commission;

23 “(7) a representative of an Indian Tribe or
24 Tribal organization, appointed by the Secretary of
25 Labor;

1 “(8) a representative of a rural telecommuni-
2 cations carrier, appointed by the Chairman of the
3 Commission;

4 “(9) a representative of a telecommunications
5 contractor firm, appointed by the Chairman of the
6 Commission;

7 “(10) a representative of a minority institution
8 (as defined in section 365 of the Higher Education
9 Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1067k)), appointed by the
10 Secretary of Education; and

11 “(11) a representative of a labor organization,
12 appointed by the Secretary of Labor.

13 “(e) NO COMPENSATION.—A member of the tele-
14 communications interagency working group shall serve
15 without compensation.

16 “(f) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 180
17 days after the date on which the telecommunications inter-
18 agency working group is established, the working group
19 shall submit a report containing recommendations to ad-
20 dress the workforce needs of the telecommunications in-
21 dustry to—

22 “(1) the Committee on Commerce, Science, and
23 Transportation of the Senate;

24 “(2) the Committee on Health, Education,
25 Labor, and Pensions of the Senate;

1 “(3) the Committee on Energy and Commerce
2 of the House of Representatives; and

3 “(4) the Committee on Education and Labor of
4 the House of Representatives.

5 “(g) NONAPPLICABILITY OF FACA.—The Federal
6 Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.) shall not apply
7 to the telecommunications interagency working group.”.

8 (b) SUNSET.—Section 344 of the Communications
9 Act of 1934, as added by subsection (a), shall be repealed
10 on the day after the date on which the interagency work-
11 ing group established under subsection (b) of that section
12 submits the report to Congress under subsection (f) of
13 that section.

14 **SEC. 3. TELECOMMUNICATIONS WORKFORCE GUIDANCE.**

15 Not later than 270 days after the date of enactment
16 of this Act, the Chairman of the Federal Communications
17 Commission, in consultation with the Secretary of Labor,
18 shall establish and issue guidance on how States can ad-
19 dress the workforce needs of the telecommunications in-
20 dustry, including guidance on how a State workforce de-
21 velopment board established under section 101 of the
22 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C.
23 3111) can—

1 (1) utilize Federal resources available to States
2 to meet the workforce needs of the telecommuni-
3 cations industry; and

4 (2) promote and improve recruitment in quali-
5 fied industry-led workforce development programs,
6 including the Telecommunications Industry Reg-
7 istered Apprenticeship Program.

8 **SEC. 4. GAO ASSESSMENT OF WORKFORCE NEEDS OF THE**
9 **TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY.**

10 (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

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

15 (2) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMIT-
16 TEES.—The term “appropriate congressional com-
17 mittees” means—

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

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

22 (C) the Committee on Energy and Com-
23 merce of the House of Representatives; and

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

1 (3) BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE.—The term
2 “broadband infrastructure” means any buried, un-
3 derground, or aerial facility, and any wireless or
4 wireline connection, that enables users to send and
5 receive voice, video, data, graphics, or any combina-
6 tion thereof.

7 (b) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date
8 of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the
9 United States shall submit to the appropriate congress-
10 sional committees a report that estimates the number of
11 skilled telecommunications workers that will be required
12 to build and maintain—

13 (1) broadband infrastructure in rural areas;
14 and

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

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