

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION POLICY BRIEF

Restore JTED Funding for High School Graduate up to the Age of 22

Position- Joint Technical Education Districts (JTEDs) are unique systems that can enhance the realization of potential for young adult populations in Arizona.

Until last year, JTEDs received funding for high school graduates up to age 22. The lack of continued funding forced JTEDs to discontinue offering tuition free JTED programs to high school graduates. There are approximately 146,510 young adults living in Arizona who are considered “opportunity youth” (Morison Institute, 2015). Opportunity youth are individuals aged 16-24 who are neither in school nor employed. The economic potential of an opportunity youth cohort is significant. Each opportunity youth cohort imposes – on average compared to other youth- an immediate taxpayer burden of \$13,900 per year (The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth, 2012). At that rate, Arizona is experiencing a \$2.04 billion yearly tax burden from the opportunity youth population. Many of these individuals lost a resource to becoming economically independent when high school graduate JTED funding was prohibited.



Source: West MEC- National HOSA Competition

College enrollment is increasingly becoming an unreachable financial hurdle. The cost of post-secondary education by way of college increased 34% from 2000 to 2012 (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Only 69.2% of 2015 high school graduates enrolled in college (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). The problem is not that these young adults are uninterested in becoming economically independent. A full 85% of opportunity youth recognize the importance of having a good education and good job, and more than three-fourths consider it their personal responsibility to attain both (Creating Pathways to Employment, 2015). Arizona

employers are eager to hire the type of skilled worker that JTEDs have proven to produce. Two-thirds of employers indicate they have difficulty filling job vacancies due to applicants with insufficient technical skills. The technical skills gap continues to widen in fields which JTED programs can offer targeted assistance. High demand industries like manufacturing, health sciences, technology and others require a skilled workforce to flourish. Funding for JTEDs to serve high school graduates up to age 22 is an investment for which communal and economic benefits far outweigh the costs.