

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 5, 2021

Ms. Rachel Torres
Administrator
Job Corps National Office
Department of Labor
200 Constitution Ave. NW
Washington DC 20210

Dear Ms. Torres,

We write today to thank the Department of Labor (DOL) for briefing our offices regarding the Request for Proposal (RFP) that the Department issued for the operations of Tongue Point Job Corps Center (TPJCC) in Astoria, Oregon. We also write to seek further clarification on a number of concerns voiced by the Clatsop County, Oregon community as well as confirmation that the proposed housing elimination will not move forward.

As discussed in the April 14, 2021, meeting, Clatsop County community leaders had concerns with the RFP as publicly issued. The community was particularly concerned about the elimination of fifteen staff family housing units at TPJCC. The City of Astoria, and furthermore, all of Clatsop County, are experiencing a severe affordable housing shortage. In fact, today, there are only fifteen total available rental units in the City of Astoria. During the discussion, DOL staff advised that the RFP edit period would be extended to April 22, 2021, and that TPJCC housing would remain intact. We thank you for the DOL's willingness to listen and adapt to the community's needs.

In addition to housing, the community has concerns about the programs that DOL has proposed to reduce and/or eliminate. As you know, TPJCC is ranked fifth in the nation out of 120 Job Corps Centers and continues to be an incredible resource for the region. In the contract RFP, DOL has proposed eliminating the Medical Administrative Assistant, Office Administration, and Culinary Arts program from TPJCC. Additionally, DOL has proposed reducing the Clinical Medical Assistant training program by fifty percent. Community leaders have expressed concerns that these reductions and eliminations target traditionally women-dominated trades and that these cuts may have an inequitable impact on the Job Center. Concurrently, the new contract will hold TPJCC to enrollment of 211 women (45% of students) while eliminating the programs that tend to draw women students. We fully support the recruitment of women into historically male-dominated industries, and dismantling barriers that have caused these disparities. Eliminating programs that predominantly serve women students raises a question of fairness and causes concern, especially in the current economic climate where women have disproportionately been forced out of the workforce

We would respectfully ask for responses to the following questions:

1. The programs slated for elimination all received a grade of “C” per the DOL algorithm. Please advise what steps, if any, were taken to improve the rates of success in the programs prior to deciding to reduce or eliminate them.
2. We understand from our conversation that the Department did not take into consideration the impact of COVID-19 on student success both in the program and upon graduation. We believe this is particularly pertinent to the Culinary Arts program as restaurants were heavily impacted by the pandemic. Please confirm whether the potential impacts of the global pandemic on the success rates of students was taken into account.
3. Throughout our discussion, July 2019 through June 2020 was referenced as the period of time for which data was collected and a decision to reduce and/or eliminate was based on this reference period. Please provide our offices with data from previous years for comparison.

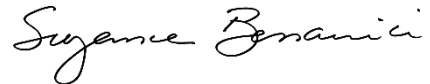
Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress