

FEBRUARY 10, 2025

# **CASSIDY, HASSAN REINTRODUCE BILL TO CONNECT INDIVIDUALS TO THE WORKFORCE**

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Bill Cassidy, M.D. (R-LA) and Maggie Hassan (D-NH) reintroduced the Improve and Enhance the Work Opportunity Tax Credit Act to build the U.S. workforce and help connect individuals to good jobs. The bill will strengthen the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), which has a proven track record of helping disadvantaged individuals secure employment. Companion legislation was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives by U.S. Representative Lloyd Smucker (R-PA-11).

“It’s not always easy to rejoin the workforce,” said Dr. Cassidy. “By helping employers connect with prospective employees struggling to find work, we boost the American economy and reduce the reliance on government assistance. It’s a win-win.”

“Ensuring that every American has access to a good-paying job is critical to the success of our country and our local communities,” **said Senator Hassan.** “This commonsense, bipartisan legislation will help connect more Granite Staters to good-paying jobs, while also lowering costs for businesses that invest in hiring veterans, people with disabilities, and others who may face barriers to employment.”

“The best anti-poverty program is a good job. The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a program that supports employers and employees as they reenter the workforce. I am committed to helping disadvantaged Americans get back to work by advancing legislation to improve this proven tool. WOTC is a bipartisan solution that every Member of Congress should support,” **said Representative Smucker.**

The WOTC provides a federal tax credit to employers who invest in American workers who have consistently faced barriers to employment, including eligible veterans, SNAP recipients, individuals with disabilities, and long-term unemployed individuals. Employers incur higher recruitment and training costs to reach WOTC eligible populations and support their successful transition back into employment. WOTC has not been updated since its enactment twenty-seven years ago, and its value has been eroded significantly due to inflation. The National

Employment Opportunity Network reports that the WOTC has saved federal governments an estimated \$202 billion over ten years.

The Improve and Enhance the Work Opportunity Tax Credit Act would:

- Update the WOTC, which has not been changed since its enactment twenty-seven years ago and encourage longer-service employment.
- Increase the current credit percentage from 40% to 50% of qualified wages.
- Add a second level of credit for employees who work 400 or more hours.
- Eliminate the arbitrary age cap at which SNAP recipients are eligible for WOTC. This change will provide an incentive to hire older workers and better align the credit with previously adopted work reforms.

The bill is supported by the Louisiana Retailers Association, Albertsons, American Health Care Association, American Hotel & Lodging Association, American Seniors Housing Association, American Staffing Association, American Trucking Associations, Argentum, Asian American Hotel Owners Association, Associated Builders and Contractors, Associated General Contractors of America, Associated Wholesale Grocers, Inc., Brookshire's, Brookshire Grocery Company, Coalition of

Franchisee Associations, Critical Labor Coalition, Due Process Institute, Dunkin Donuts Independent Franchisee Organization, FMI – The Food Industry Association, Franchise Business Services, Fresh By Brookshire's, Giant Eagle and GetGo Café + Market, H-E-B. Honest Jobs, ICSC, International Franchise Association, The Worldwide Cleaning Industry Association, The Kroger Co., NAACP, NAPEO, National Association of Convenience Stores, National Association for Home Care and Hospice, National Association of Wholesaler-Distributors, National Beer Wholesalers Association, National Employment Opportunity Network (NEON), National Franchisee Association, National Grocers Association, National Restaurant Association, National Urban League, NATSO, Pete & Gerry's Organics, LLC, Reasor's, Retail Industry Leaders Association, Retail Grocers Association MO&KS, Retail Merchants Association, SIGMA: America's Leading Fuel Marketers, Small Business & Entrepreneurship Council, Society for Human Resource Management, Spring Market, Super 1 Foods, UPS, and Wakefern Food Corp.

“The restaurant industry has hundreds of thousands of jobs that it needs to fill every month, many of which can be filled by individuals who have traditionally faced barriers to employment. Getting these people back to work is valuable to the individual, the restaurant operator and the community. We appreciate Sens. Cassidy and Hassan's efforts to improve on WOTC as a tool for

restaurant operators to hire needed staff and increase their business viability,” said **Sean Kennedy, Executive Vice President of Public Affairs, National Restaurant Association.**

“The Louisiana Restaurant Association applauds Sen. Cassidy for his leadership in introducing the Improve and Enhance the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) Act. Restaurants in Louisiana are not just places to enjoy great food; they are training grounds for skill development and second chances for many individuals facing employment barriers. The WOTC program is essential for fostering opportunities, strengthening our workforce, and contributing to the economic vitality of our communities,” said **Stan Harris, President and CEO, Louisiana Restaurant Association.**

“America’s workforce is facing a perfect storm. The labor shortage, exacerbated by demographic shifts, aging population, declining participation, mismatch of skills and the lingering effects of the pandemic, has left employers struggling to fill jobs in critical industries. The Critical Labor Coalition strongly supports the *Improve and Enhance the Work Opportunity Tax Credit Act*, which will modernize WOTC to reflect today’s labor market realities and ensure that businesses—especially those hit hardest by workforce shortages—are incentivized to hire individuals from

historically underemployed groups who may otherwise face barriers to entering the workforce,” said **Misty Chally, Executive Director, Critical Labor Coalition.**

“FMI – The Food Industry Association applauds Senators Bill Cassidy (R-LA) and Maggie Hassan (D-NH) for introducing this legislation to improve the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC). WOTC is an important workforce-building tool, utilized by our grocery, wholesaler, and product supplier members, to hire individuals facing barriers to employment. FMI is excited to work with Senators Cassidy and Hassan and House companion bill sponsors Representatives Lloyd Smucker (R-PA) and Terri Sewell (D-AL) on strengthening the path for veterans, SNAP participants, justice-involved individuals, and others to obtain meaningful employment in the food industry through enactment of this measure,” said **Christine Pollack, FMI Vice President, Government Relations.**

“The Work Opportunity Tax Credit has been a vital resource for franchise business owners that provide job opportunities to workers who have faced barriers to employment. IFA applauds Sens. Cassidy and Hassan for taking this important step to help franchised businesses hire workers from underserved communities and provide additional relief, especially since finding labor

remains the most significant challenge for local franchises,” said Mike Layman, Chief Advocacy Officer, International Franchise Association.

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