

December 2017

An Open Letter to Illinois Counselors:

Thank you for your commitment and the work you do to prepare students to be successful in their pursuits of their individual and exciting futures.

We are writing to ask for your help in ensuring that every single student who graduates in Illinois can look forward to a future they can be proud of. This letter is a request for partnership and action.

We are concerned that some of your students may be missing out on opportunities that can lead to fulfilling careers. The economy is changing, and while many recent graduates struggle to get their careers off the ground, employers like us can't find enough people who have the technical training to fill high skilled jobs in the trades.

The Illinois Department of Employment Security projects over 1,400 annual job openings for automotive and diesel technicians until the year 2024.

We are talking about jobs that pay well and offer plenty of opportunities for people to advance and build a successful career doing something they love. But old stereotypes and stigmas, and a system that undervalues career paths that don't require a two or four-year degree, are keeping students from even considering these jobs, much less getting the training they need.

This is where you come in. As employers, we will continue to promote the skilled trades and high-quality technical schools as a valuable path to career success.

But we can't do it alone. If we're serious about helping students find success, our perceptions of what constitutes a good job and how to prepare for it must adapt.

Together, let's work to undo long-held stigmas that limit opportunity and stifle potential. Let's open minds to opportunities available in the skilled trades. Let's encourage students who might be a fit to consider technical schools that do the right thing and have strong student outcomes. Let's recognize there are multiple paths to the American Dream.

Most importantly, let's guide Illinois' young people to their success, and help them land in good jobs and fulfilling careers. We challenge you to talk to us – one of the many employers looking for quality employees – and tour local technical schools to help us shift the current perceptions plaguing the skilled trades. We look forward to your support and partnership.

Sincerely,

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