FIA supports job training initiatives and programs that work. Job recruitment, training, retention and advanced technical education are critical to the future of manufacturing in America.

The U.S. manufacturing sector currently has more than 600,000 unfilled jobs due to a shortage of skilled workers. At the same time, employers, educators, states and the federal government struggle with how best to train manufacturing workers in a time of dwindling or non-existent state and federal dollars.

Generally speaking, FIA members find that on-the-job training programs and public-private cooperatives with local community colleges work well. As an example, as part of its efforts to help members recruit skilled workers, FIA and its sister organization, the Forging Industry Educational and Research Foundation (FIERF), reach out to various universities to foster forging curricula and experiential training though educational resources and financial support at undergraduate and graduate levels.

FIA believes that direct federal government involvement in job skills training is often redundant, poorly focused, and inefficient. Instead, FIA supports better coordination among educators, government, and the private sector to recruit employees into manufacturing and provide them the K-12 foundation and job training to fill high-skill positions. Such efforts must be employer-focused, demand-driven workforce development programs that meet the needs of manufacturers and combine vocational training with on-the-job training programs.

As a first step in reforming the current redundant and wasteful Workforce Investment Act programs, FIA supports HR 803, the Supporting Knowledge and Investing in Lifelong Skills (SKILLS) Act. HR 803 would eliminate many ineffective and redundant employment and training programs, streamline others, and create a Workforce Investment Fund to serve as a single source of support for employers, workers, and job seekers. It would also strengthen the role of employers in the workforce training decisions by eliminating 19 federal mandates governing workforce investment board representation.

HR 803 passed the House of Representatives on March 15, 2013. We urge the Senate to pass HR 803 as soon as possible.