



July 31, 2019

The Honorable Charles Grassley
Chairman
Committee on Finance
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Ranking Member
Committee on Finance
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Grassley and Ranking Member Wyden:

On behalf of the Security Industry Association (SIA), I would like to express its strong support for S. 379, which would allow beneficiaries to use 529 plan funds to cover expenses associated with obtaining a postsecondary credential. This legislation will strengthen our nation's labor force by allowing individuals to have greater flexibility in pursuing educational and career development opportunities that align with current workforce demands.

SIA represents nearly 1,000 innovative companies that provide safety and security technology solutions vital to public safety and the protection of lives, property, information and critical infrastructure. The security industry relies heavily on postsecondary education programs, such as certificates and certifications, to ensure the workforce possesses the requisite competencies to perform critical functions in safety and security. Many of our industry's performance standards are validated through credentials and maintained through continuing education, which makes them indispensable to public safety and business continuity.

SIA has undertaken a number of initiatives to address the "security skills gap" within our industry and help our members to identify and recruit qualified employees. As you and your colleagues begin to consider S. 379, urge the committee to include expenses necessary to obtain or maintain certification or licensure credentials that are separate from preparatory educational and training programs. Specifically, we recommend the following amendments to the legislation:

1. S. 379 Should Permit Use of 529 Funds for Expenses, Fees and Costs Related to Certification Exams and Certification Maintenance

In most cases, to earn a certification credential, a candidate must pass an examination that is developed and administered by a separate organization from any program that provided the candidate's preparatory training or education. Expanding the scope of S. 379 to include these expenses would ease the financial burden on individuals seeking to apply for or maintain certification in a wider array of occupations and professions. In addition, under this proposed amendment, investing in 529 plans would have continued relevance and value to individuals who seek opportunities for career growth or to obtain a credential allowing them to switch careers, even if they have already completed college.

2. The Use of the Word "Program" in S. 379 Should be Expanded Beyond Local Programs

Expanding the definition of "program" in this way would include accredited institutions, online training programs or courses offered nationally to prepare individuals for certification exams, rather than just local or regional

training programs. This would ensure that 529 beneficiaries will have more options as they seek to pursue their chosen professions.

Enabling individuals to use 529 funds to cover certification-related education and examinations would greatly expand the reach of 529 benefits to cover a much broader and more diverse group of individuals seeking to enter the workforce and allow them to advance their careers. Please let us know if there is any way we can assist you as you continue to examine these issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Don Erickson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Don Erickson
CEO
Security Industry Association