



# PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION COALITION

## **Agenda PCC Member Strategy Call Wednesday, September 10, 2025 12:00 pm ET**

*Steering Committee:* I.C.E. (Denise Roosendaal), ASAE (Mary Kate Cunningham, Kyle Hayes)  
*Legal Counsel:* Jerry Jacobs, Craig Saperstein, Julia Judish, Lori Panosyan, Laura Killalea, Jaria Martin (Pillsbury)

### **I. Welcome/Membership Updates**

- a. Invoices for FY 2025-2026
- b. Reminder: Password change for the For Members section of the website coming in October
  - i) Members who have paid all or part of their dues for this fiscal year (or members who indicate to us that their dues are coming) will receive the new password.
  - ii) For any questions, please email [info@profcertcoalition.org](mailto:info@profcertcoalition.org)

### **II. Federal 529 Expansion and Guest Presentation:**

- a. *Insights from Mark Leeds, Pillsbury Tax Partner*
  - i) The IRS has an exceptional amount of authority regarding setting rules for withdrawals from 529 accounts.
  - ii) Formal regulations to implement the changes to sec. 529 of the tax code must be approved through a lengthy notice-and-comment rulemaking process which may not arrive for some time
  - iii) However, the IRS may issue guidance -- via interim notices or revenue procedures -- that interpret changes to the Tax Code before formal regulations are issued.
  - iv) Based on the way the PCC originally drafted the legislation that is now law, we know that accredited certifications programs, credentials that appear on the DOD COOL databases, or state Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act lists, and occupational

licenses, are all recognized postsecondary credentials. Beneficiaries are already authorized to use funds in their 529 plans for expenses associated with those credentials and with training programs listed in the statute. As such, if your credential or program is not specifically identified in the legislation, the quickest path to achieving qualification could be to pursue accreditation or inclusion on one of the aforementioned lists/directories.

- v) However, the legislation also directs the IRS to develop standards for credentials and programs that do not meet the statutory qualification criteria but are of a high quality and therefore consistent with legislative intent. Pillsbury is drafting both a letter and a model interim guidance letter to guide the IRS's determination as to what constitutes a recognized postsecondary credential or postsecondary credential program that is not automatically qualified under the statute.
- vi) The letter will outline two potential paths for qualification:
  - (1) Path 1: Certification programs that meet five specific factors automatically qualify, enabling taxpayers to make qualified withdrawals. These factors are:
    - a. Maintain a process to define, periodically review enforce, and update specific standards regarding knowledge and skills that are important to the occupation or specialty for which the credential is issued;
    - b. Administer a psychometrically valid assessment of relevant competencies for the occupation or specialty that is based on job analysis conducted by a representative panel of subject matter experts in order to determine whether an individual seeking the credential meets standards for initial certification, and if an assessment is required for recertification;
    - c. Establish and enforce a code of professional conduct for credential holders;

- d. Require candidates to have requirements for certification and recertification requirements or continuing certification requirements of the certifying body that granted the initial certification;
- e. Make information publicly available in an accessible format.

(2) Path 2: The IRS may set forth an application opportunity under which programs may apply for IRS certification to be recognized as eligible for 529 withdrawals.

- a. Potential for the creation of an IRS list of reputable certification programs.
  - b. The IRS could issue temporary guidance first, followed by revenue procedure.
  - c. This certification process has been used in other IRS contexts.
- vii) Industry engagement with the IRS is important given staff cuts and funding reductions by Congress.
- viii) PCC members may consider congressional outreach to reinforce the importance of implementation.

b. *Implementation of 529 Expansion: PCC FAQ document*

- (i) The [PCC FAQ document](#) addresses questions we have received regarding implementation of the PCC's Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act.
- (ii) The FAQ provides information regarding the nature and use of 529 savings plans, the ways in which they are changed by our legislation, the types of credentials and credentialing programs that qualify under the new law, how state administration of 529 plans could affect implementation, and how credentialing organizations can promote the expansion of 529 plans.
- (iii) PCC members are welcome to use and redistribute the FAQ in unaltered form.
- (iv) The FAQ document will be updated as implementation proceeds.

- c. *Outreach to IRS on development of guidance for recognition of certification programs*
  - (i) Historically, the IRS has been receptive to grassroots campaigns, particularly when industry groups take part in the process.
- d. *Planned state level outreach to states needing to make conforming changes to their 529 plans.*

### **III. Attacks on the Value of Certification**

- a. *Wall Street Journal [article](#) on AEI/Burning Glass June 2025 [study](#)*
  - (i) The article critiques non-degree credentials, citing low quality and low return on investment. However, we have concerns about the data sources and the study's methodology, which:
    - (1) Relies on wage increases as the sole metric of value;
    - (2) Covers only a one-year period which limits the conclusions;
  - (ii) Burning Glass's [credential index](#) contains inaccuracies. PCC members are encouraged to verify their certification for accuracy.
- b. *Strategies for responding*
  - i) Share examples of inaccurate information about their certification programs; ICE and ASAE are working on responses to WSJ and AEI.
  - ii) Highlight the broader value of credentials, including community impact and public protection.
  - iii) Leverage this issue to promote 529 expansion and IRS guidance efforts.
  - iv) Monitor other media outlets for coverage of this study.
  - v) Incorporate response efforts into state outreach strategy.

### **IV. Questions**