

Opening Statement for Ranking Member Susan Davis (CA-53)
“On-The-Job: Rebuilding the Workforce through Apprenticeships”
Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development Hearing
Wednesday September 5, 2018 at 10:15 a.m.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

As our Committee looks to advance policies that build a highly skilled workforce, we must support training models that help students, workers, and businesses succeed. I am proud to be here today to discuss the success of quality apprenticeship programs in meeting this goal.

As we have heard in previous hearings on the topic, apprenticeships are a method of on-the-job training that have successfully trained workers for centuries. The building trades and their employer partners, for example, have used registered apprenticeships to produce highly skilled workers for decades.

Because of this model’s historic success, we were able to come together in a bipartisan manner under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to encourage the workforce development system to partner with registered apprenticeship programs around the country.

Investments in these programs over the last few years have expanded apprenticeships into new fields, but there is still so much room to grow. I am looking forward to hearing how we can continue to expand quality apprenticeships into new fields, while allowing more non-traditional students to access these lucrative career pathways.

As we’ll hear today, successful apprenticeship programs work with pre-apprenticeship programs and local community colleges to develop curriculum that gives apprentices stackable, transferable credentials and allows them to transition into other higher education pathways. These programs also work to educate teachers, families and young people about the benefits of registered apprenticeships.

Chairman Guthrie and I recently came together to introduce the APPRENTICE Act, which would allocate resources to increase the awareness of apprenticeship programs around the country. Funds could be used to publicize quality apprenticeship programs, inform educators, and train administrators.

I am hopeful that our bipartisan commitment to the apprenticeship model will move our APPRENTICE bill, and other thoughtful apprenticeship legislation, through Congress.

We know that apprenticeships must be prestigious enough to attract students who seek the most challenging and aspirational programs. I often speak of the dinner table discussions where families try to decide what career pathway is best for their children. Parents want to know that their children are receiving a quality education that will yield a widely recognized credential.

As we've heard time and again from both Republican and Democratic witnesses before this committee, the key to maintaining the prestige of apprenticeships is ensuring that we keep the qualities that have made these programs a success.

We must ensure that while encouraging industry input in apprenticeships, there is also accountability to taxpayers, apprentices and businesses. I agree with experts who are concerned about efforts to invest taxpayer dollars into programs that lack protections for students and their families.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on this committee to expand high-quality, prestigious apprenticeship programs, while ensuring that protections remain in place for students.

I also believe that we can make apprenticeships more appealing by expanding them beyond the traditional trades. We'd like to see companies build upon the phenomenal work that the building trades have done to open up apprenticeships in new industries.

And we know that we have to engage with all of our partners in this effort. Whether it is learning from the important work that unions have done in this space, asking businesses and industry to continue engaging with the Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeships, or looking to schools and nonprofit organizations to develop meaningful curriculum for apprentices, we know that this must be a collaborative process.

If that's the case, let's give the appropriators clarity in the form of an authorization. I know that Ranking Member Scott, myself, and most of the Democrats on this committee support Rep. Pocan's LEARNs act and are willing to have a markup on it tomorrow, if the Chair would schedule it.

I know through my conversations with Members on both sides of this Committee that apprenticeships have great support. I hope we can come together in a bipartisan manner to promote registered apprenticeship programs.