

**Statement of the International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace &
Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW)
Submitted to the
Committee on Education and Workforce, of the U.S. House of
Representatives Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce
Training
Hearing on April 9, 2013**

“Reviving Our Economy: The Role of Higher Education in Job Growth and
Development”

The International Union, United Auto Workers (UAW) welcomes the opportunity to submit comments to the Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training. The UAW is one of the largest and most diverse unions in North America, with members in virtually every sector of the economy. The UAW has more than one million active and retired members in the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico. From our earliest days, the UAW has been a leader in the struggle to secure economic and social justice for all people. We are deeply committed to both higher education and job growth and development here in the United States.

This testimony addresses successful union-employer training programs, ways in which unions find and train employees, the role of unions in job training, the effects of attacks on unions, and finally, the importance of serving on Workforce Investment Act (WIA) boards and is being submitted **solely** on behalf of the UAW and not the joint programs.

Successful union-employer training programs

At General Motors, the UAW-GM joint partnership has developed many successful joint training programs. These were developed to ensure that our customers receive world class products and services. Today’s world customer demands quality. This not only pertains to industry, but also to view of citizens of this country towards the quality of our government. They deserve the best that our government and GM products and services can produce.

A partnership formed by the UAW and GM has produced that quality. Many joint training programs i.e. Quality Network/General Motors Manufacturing System (GMS) ensure that all best practices from around the world are used to uniformly produce high quality products. A GM vehicle produced in China uses the same system that a vehicle in Michigan uses. This was accomplished by a joint partnership between the UAW and GM and has spread worldwide. Such a uniform system is where we have to be in order to compete in a global economy. Other examples of successful union-employer training programs are our UAW-GM Apprenticeship Training, Work/Family Program, Preventive Maintenance,

Safety Training and Suggestion Training, which help reduce costs while increasing quality throughout the system.

Ways in Which Unions Find and Train Employees

Unions and the companies they represent also make apprenticeship programs available to both employees and people looking for employment. Trades have played an important part in all aspects of labor history and continue to be vital to our workforce. We set the standard. Non-union trade programs are still far behind union programs in terms of quality and reliability. Joint training programs set up by the union and the employer offer the vast majority of training needed by employees and/or members in order to be effective in the workplace.

Unions do an excellent job of recognizing potential. If you show the intuition to strive forward in a particular area, you will be noticed. Unions are always on the lookout for members striving to improve and are there to lend a helping hand and direction in achieving the skill sets needed to advance.

Role of Unions in Job Training

Unions have long been part of our nation's history in numerous ways, fighting for better pay, safer working conditions, health care and retirement benefits, education and civic participation. Unions have brought diverse voices together, and their struggles have elevated the working conditions, the standard of living and the recognition of not just their members, but of all those who labor.

Unions played a major role in ending sweatshops and the use of child labor, both of which were so common at the beginning of the 20th century. The International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, or ILGWU, was one of the first unions to have a primarily female membership. And in the aftermath of the tragic Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in 1911, in which more than 100 mostly young immigrant women were killed, the ILGWU was at the forefront of reforming working conditions and pushing for comprehensive safety and workers' compensation laws.

Unions are a vital part of our social fabric and economic future. Unions run the largest career training program in the United States outside of the military. Union apprenticeship programs generally partner with employers or industries to provide the kind of training that hard-wires excellence into workers and places them in good jobs that can support families. That's worth a lot when unemployment is stubbornly high and personal incomes are falling.

Effect of Attacks on Unions

Unions are just normal folks -- people who come together to improve their lives and their workplaces, because they recognize there's strength in numbers. The one thing that some of public does know is that union members, thanks to collective bargaining, have higher wages and better benefits. But union

membership actually raises living and working standards for all working men and women – both union and non-union.

The truth is that unions work side by side with companies to expand the scope of their technological advancements and profit margins. The public hears about attacks on unions and becomes wary about investing or buying products or services from companies with union representation. Unfortunately this serves to be a self-fulfilling prophecy, which in turn affects the profit margin of these companies. That produces a negative effect on our production and service industry in our state and country.

Pride in what one does or produces is important to everyone. The attacks on unions affect workers and manifest conflict within them. Union members know that they produce quality products and services in an economically efficient manner. But, if the public has a negative opinion of your work standards, it impacts the greater workforce in a non-positive way. Everyone takes pride in the fruits of their labor and human nature craves that others recognize the trueness and quality of that work, and it is detrimental when that is not recognized.

When union membership rates are high, so is the share of income that goes to the middle class. When those rates fall, income inequality grows -- the middle class shrinks and the 1% gets richer. Collective bargaining affects more than wages and benefits. Union teachers bargain for smaller class sizes. Union nurses bargain for better patient care.

Working together, union members and their community allies also make up a powerful lobby for the common good. They've helped secure for us all the eight-hour day, job safety laws, overtime pay, Medicare and Social Security, civil rights protections, fair treatment for women and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender workers and much more.

These are some of the reasons even people who don't fit the typical stereotypes of union members have recognized the power and importance of forming unions. Examples include carwash workers in LA, professional athletes, writers and directors for TV shows, just to name a few. Go to a movie and you're enjoying the work of one of America's most unionized industries, from the actors and camera crews to set designers.

Effect of Taking Unions off Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Boards

Recently, H.R. 803, the *Supporting Knowledge and Investing in Lifelong Skills (SKILLS) Act* passed the U.S. House of Representatives and we raised significant concerns about this legislation and the detrimental impact it would have on several programs that are vital to working families. The bill failed to take into account labor's leading role in workforce training. As previously stated, the labor movement is the largest workforce trainer of adults outside the U.S. military. Regrettably, the SKILLS Act categorically excludes labor

participation in state and local workforce investment boards. The bill failed to take into account labor's leading role in workforce training and the discounts the value that workers bring to workforce investment boards.

The purpose of the Workforce Investment Act, (WIA) is to provide workforce investment activities that increase the employment, retention and earnings of participants and increase occupational skill attainment by participants, which will improve the quality of the workplace, reduce welfare dependency and enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the economy. We only grow and improve when we work together. We may not agree all of the time, but through collaboration comes a new and better way of doing things. The effects of the board becoming a one way only philosophy will lend itself to limiting the success of the objectives.

We also oppose giving governors the authority, without state legislative review, to consolidate the funding and administration of Workforce Investment Act and numerous other programs. Giving governors the discretion to decide who would receive services and what kind of services they receive does not encourage these decisions to be based on legitimate workforce needs but on political convenience and ideology. Handing such authority over to governors would likely create scenarios where workforce services would vary greatly from state to state as well as the funding levels of programs within that state, solely based on whoever holds political power.

The SKILLS act would eliminate the Wagner-Peyser program and we are greatly concerned with the impact this will have on undermining the existing Unemployment Insurance (UI) system. The Wagner-Peyser staff conducts the UI "work test," an eligibility requirement that requires UI claimants to be actively seeking work in order to receive UI benefits. H.R. 803 instead assigns responsibility for the work test and reemployment services for UI claimants to local workforce boards. The loss of accountability and state control resulting from this change would lead the unemployed to remain out of work longer, draw state and federal unemployment benefits for a longer period of time, and thereby undermine the state UI trust funds.

In short, we believe that labor brings a strong voice to jobs training programs and our ability to have our voices heard helps America's workers. We are deeply committed to ensuring that ALL workers have the opportunity to find good paying jobs.

In closing, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the Committee on Education and Workforce, of the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce.