



**Opening Statement of Rep. Brett Guthrie (R-KY), Chairman,
Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development on
“On-the-Job: Rebuilding the Workforce through Apprenticeships.”**

Good morning, and welcome to today’s subcommittee hearing. I would like to thank members of the subcommittee and our witnesses for joining us today as we examine ways in which we can continue to strengthen our national workforce development efforts and help more Americans get the skills they need to land in-demand jobs.

In the last several years, we have seen an economic boom take place under Republican leadership in Congress and the White House. The job market is strong and unemployment is at near-historic lows. In fact, employers need more people to work for them. In May of this year, the Bureau of Labor and Statistics (BLS) issued a report that for the first time in BLS’ history, the number of job openings in the United States exceeded the number of job seekers nationwide.

I have seen this firsthand in Kentucky’s Second District. This August, I visited construction sites, factories, shipping facilities, and more businesses throughout my congressional district, and the one thing I heard from all of them is how they need more skilled workers. These are good jobs that some people unfortunately are missing out on because they don’t have the necessary skills.

In a 2018 survey from the ManpowerGroup, 46 percent of employers in the United States reported that they struggle to hire employees with the necessary skills for the job, and for the 6th year in a row, skilled trade jobs are the hardest positions to fill across the globe.

The American workforce is presently facing a shortage of over six million skilled workers, and we need approaches at both the public and private levels to successfully bridge this skills gap.

When I grew up, my dad and many of the people in our town worked for the local Ford factory. Back then, if you got a job with Ford, you entered a

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pipeline that taught you necessary skills as you moved up the ladder. Sadly, many factories that provided that kind of job security have shut down – including the one in my hometown. We must find other ways to bridge the skills gap.

In 2014, after years of hard work from the Education and Workforce Committee, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was signed into law. WIOA made significant progress rebuilding our national workforce development system by promoting employer-led innovation in and access to work-based learning experiences like on-the-job education and apprenticeship programs.

By strengthening on-the-job technical education and apprenticeship programs, we can streamline the connection between education and the workforce and encourage more Americans to pursue in-demand jobs, improving their own earning potential and the national workforce as a whole.

I want to continue this progress we made in WIOA with a renewed focus on apprenticeships. That's why I worked with my colleague, Ranking Member Susan Davis, to establish the Apprenticeship Caucus. We held our first event earlier this summer, where we brought a wide range of representatives together to talk about how Congress can support these programs. We also introduced the APPRENTICE Act, which would establish a grant program to expand apprenticeship programs.

I look forward to continuing the conversation about apprenticeships at today's hearing. I am pleased to welcome today's witnesses and I look forward to hearing their testimony as we discuss innovative ways we can develop our workforce and help more Americans learn valuable skills on the job.

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