



COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION AND
THE WORKFORCE

COMMITTEE STATEMENT

Opening Statement of Rep. Brett Guthrie (R-KY), Chairman, Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development Hearing on “Strengthening Access and Accountability to Work in Welfare Programs.”

Good afternoon, and welcome to today’s subcommittee hearing. I’d like to thank our panel of witnesses and our members for joining today’s important discussion on how the inclusion of work requirements within public benefit programs can help beneficiaries return to the workforce and ensure stewardship of public resources.

Since 1996, work requirements have provided families who receive federal assistance the opportunity to grow the skills they need to succeed and eventually reenter the workforce. The ultimate goal of these programs is to help beneficiaries find themselves in a position where they no longer need to rely on federal assistance.

More than 50 million people in the U.S. have participated in major means-tested government assistance programs, and the work requirements associated with many of these programs have allowed many Americans to find a pathway back into the workforce because they gained the ability to be self-sufficient through the process.

One of the most successful programs in this regard has been the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. TANF includes twelve different workforce activities that beneficiaries can participate in to meet the work requirements in order to receive federal assistance.

These include programs such as subsidized private sector employment, skills-based education, job search and job readiness assistance, community service programs, and job-skills education directly related to employment.

It is encouraging to see that these programs cover such a wide variety of opportunities for beneficiaries to get a foot in the workforce door in the hope that one day they will no longer need federal assistance because of the skills they’ve developed.

We have also seen evidence that these types of programs are working to help Americans provide for themselves, their families, and pursue the full extent of the American dream.

Since the creation of this program in 1996, there has been a sharp decline in the number of federal benefit recipients who must complete work requirements as part of their participation in a federal program. Congress needs to be exploring how workforce development opportunities can be integrated into other benefit programs as well.

Right now, we are looking for ways to reform our entitlement system, which is failing certain beneficiaries who feel stuck in the status quo. An important part of this effort is helping people reenter the workforce.

I'm looking forward to hearing from our panel of witnesses today on how we can continue to assist beneficiaries find good-paying jobs and regain their financial independence. I also appreciate our witnesses being flexible with the House schedule. We had to postpone this hearing from a few weeks ago, so thank you for appearing today instead.

#