

Opening Statement of Rep. Burgess Owens (R-UT), Chairman  
Higher Education and Workforce Development Subcommittee  
“Building a Talent Marketplace: How LERs Empower Workers  
and Expand Opportunity”  
December 10, 2025

(As prepared for delivery)

In today's workforce search, the hiring process is costly and extremely inefficient. This is especially the case when employers are searching for workers with needed specialized skills. For workers attempting to navigate the job market it is now more complicated than ever. Translating skills gained through education, training, or life experience into terms that employers understand can be daunting.

In this present era of innovation, which now includes the power of AI, we need smarter ways to connect jobseekers' skills with employers' needs. Our economy is changing dramatically, and the way potential employees enter and engage with it must change too. Education Preparation and Workforce Placement innovation through the use of Learning Employment Records is the future.

As we shift away from the “college-for-all” mentality and toward a skills-first approach short-term credentials, work-based learning, and apprenticeships are on the rise. Key legislation, like the enactment of Workforce Pell Grants in the Republicans' recent Working Families Tax Cuts, will further the growth of these alternative pathways.

With over one million unique credentials available, pathway options for learners can be confusing. LERs help solve this problem. They give learners clear insight into the skills needed for that first job and what's needed to continue advancement in their careers. LERs will bring greater clarity to both sides of the labor market—helping workers identify opportunities and employers find the right talent.

LERs are the future. But they are not enough on their own. When paired with a transparent credential registry and skills-based job descriptions, they can power a talent marketplace where ability, not pedigree, drives opportunity.

As we modernize our connection of education and work through verifiable credentials, we can build a labor market that works for everyone—where workers have agency, employers have confidence, and opportunity is based on what you know and can do day one.