

**Opening Statement of Rep. Tim Walberg (R-MI), Chairman
Committee on Education and Workforce
Hearing: “Unleashing America’s Workforce and Strengthening Our Economy”
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(As prepared for delivery)

Good morning. We are here today to discuss the challenges that American workers and businesses faced over the last four years, as well as the opportunities before us as President Trump and a Republican-led Congress move forward with solutions to get the nation’s workforce on track.

From its first day, the Biden-Harris administration implemented a policy agenda that jeopardized the American workforce and economy. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the nation experienced historic levels of job loss. Democrats exacerbated the problem by enacting COVID mandates that rewarded Americans for staying home—and out of the workforce. Democrat “stimulus” spending hampered job creation and made more Americans dependent on the federal government. And as a result of the Biden-Harris administration’s reckless spending spree, American families and businesses were rocked by record-high inflation, which hit a 40-year high in 2022. Workers saw their standard of living decline as inflation outpaced average wage growth.

On top of that, the Biden-Harris administration pursued a radical regulatory agenda which put up barriers to hiring and harmed American workers and businesses. One example of this regulatory onslaught included the National Labor Relations Board’s joint employer rule,

which threatened to upend the franchise business model, limit entrepreneurship, and kill jobs—had it not been halted by a federal court. An economic analysis found that a similar joint employer standard which was in effect during the Obama administration cost the entire franchise sector \$33.3 billion annually, resulting in as many as 376,000 lost job opportunities.

Another regulation raised the salary threshold for employees to be considered exempt from overtime pay by more than 60 percent. This rule would have cost job creators an estimated \$1.3 billion, increased compliance burdens on small businesses, and limited workers' opportunities for advancement—had it not been halted by a federal court.

Yet another regulation made it harder for individuals to choose how they work. Democrats' war on independent contractors stifled innovation and creativity, ultimately harming workers, business, and the U.S. economy.

And this list is not exhaustive. A recent study from the American Action Forum found that the Biden administration issued a staggering \$1.8 trillion in cumulative regulatory costs over four years, far exceeding any preceding administration on record.

Many of the challenges from the last four years still remain. But with President Trump back in office and a Republican-led Congress, workers and job creators are increasingly optimistic for the return of pro-growth economic policies that unleash the ingenuity and entrepreneurial spirit of the American workforce.

Following the 2024 election, small business optimism surged, reaching the highest point since October 2018.

Just this week Apple announced plans to invest more than \$500 billion in the U.S. and hire 20,000 workers over the next four years to support American innovation and manufacturing.

President Trump is already making good on his promise to root out wasteful spending and to stop the job-killing regulatory blitz. Upon taking office, he ordered a review of all pending regulations and signed an executive order directing federal agencies to eliminate 10 existing regulations for each new regulation issued.

There is also optimism that Congress and the President will extend many provisions of the *Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017* and enact new tax proposals to benefit working families and businesses. Following enactment of the 2017 Tax Act, working Americans saw real wages rise nearly 5 percent in 2018 and 2019, the fastest growth in 20 years.

And this Congress, the Committee on Education and Workforce will consider legislative proposals to improve the lives of American workers, reduce burdens on small businesses, address critical workforce shortages, and stimulate economic growth.

Before I turn to the Ranking Member for his opening remarks, I want to recognize a Committee staffer who has served both the majority and minority.

Sheila Havenner, the Committee's Information Technology Specialist, is retiring after more than a decade of public service. She has been an invaluable asset supporting the operations of the Committee and its staff. She will be missed, and I wish her the best in her well-deserved retirement.