



## COMMITTEE STATEMENT

**Opening Statement of Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC), Republican Leader  
Committee on Education and Labor Full Committee Hearing:  
"H.R. 7309, WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT OF 2022, AND H.R. 7310, PROTECTING  
AMERICA'S RETIREMENT SECURITY ACT"  
April 5, 2022**

(As prepared for delivery)

Today, Education and Labor Committee Republican Leader Virginia Foxx (R-NC) delivered the following opening statement, as prepared for delivery, at a full committee markup regarding workforce development and retirement:

*"The Committee is considering two bills that are missed opportunities for bipartisanship.*

*"The first bill this Committee is considering today is the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2022 (H.R. 7309). It is a great disappointment to me that we were unable to reach a bipartisan agreement. I hope we can continue working together on this topic however.*

*"Unfortunately, this bill before us today fails to empower workers to gain the skills they need for a successful career. However, it does spend a lot of hardworking taxpayer dollars that are unnecessary to spend.*

*"One of the biggest problems in H.R. 7309 is that it limits input from employers and expands the role of the federal government. Specifically, it increases the size of state and local workforce boards in order to expand labor representation, decreasing the influence of employers and reducing the boards' focus on the needs of workers. Job creators know best what skills workers need to be successful, yet Democrats continue to undermine the importance of employers.*

*"Additionally, this bill would allow federal bureaucrats to define 'job quality' measures for on-the-job programs, which will take power out of the hands of employers. This is another Washington-knows-best policy that will end up hurting job creators and workers. Mandating 'job quality' measures for on-the-job learning programs will give federal bureaucrats, not workers, the power to judge worthwhile employment.*

*“H.R. 7309 fails to protect taxpayers at a time of rampant inflation. This bill significantly increases authorization levels above current appropriations, opens WIOA programs up to potential fraud and abuse of taxpayer dollars, and expands supportive services, which risks turning the workforce system into a welfare program. It also fails to ensure that the workforce system is actually upskilling workers. Barely one-third of participants in adult and dislocated worker programs exited WIOA in 2020 with employment connected to the skills education they received, despite pouring nearly \$2 billion in taxpayer funds into services for these job seekers that year. Again, only one-third came out of a program with the skills related to the jobs. This bill does not take adequate steps to put these dollars to better use and ensure that more individuals are obtaining the skills they need to prepare for in-demand jobs.*

*“The bill also pursues a radical progressive agenda. H.R. 7309 promotes progressive gender ideology and critical race theory by, among other things, requiring states to develop and publish state equity reports regarding performance outcomes on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender identity.*

*“The bill embraces the failed status quo rather than pursuing opportunities for innovation. This bill overemphasizes the burdensome registered apprenticeship program. This Great Depression-era system has long needed serious reform. In fiscal year 2020, only 82,000 workers completed the registered system. We have 11 million jobs open in this country right now. This comes nowhere close to meeting our economy’s workforce needs. Knowing this stat, Democrats still want to double down on this system rather than allowing for other effective work-based learning models.*

*“This legislation also expands Job Corps eligibility while weakening expectations for Job Corps success. This is a program in which 30 different government reports and audits have raised concerns over its safety, security, and performance. Students have literally died in this program and the majority wants to make it less accountable.*

*“Further, adding prevailing wage rates to WIOA will significantly increase the cost of delivering services to students in the Job Corps program, which is already extremely costly. Prevailing wage rates are notoriously inaccurate, yet Democrats continue to insist on using them to the detriment of workers and employers alike.*

*“The second bill this Committee is considering is H.R. 7310, the so-called Protecting Retirement Security Act, and it is the kind of haphazard legislation we get when Democrats go it alone.*

*“This Committee has a long history of working on bipartisan legislation to strengthen our retirement system. In fact, just last week this Committee had a major bipartisan success when the House passed the Securing a Strong Retirement Act of 2021 (H.R. 2954), which included the RISE Act, by a vote of 414-5. I was proud to lead the RISE Act with Chairman Scott, and this was a major win for American workers and retirees.*

*“We should focus on enacting the comprehensive, bipartisan RISE Act and H.R. 2954, not the*

*partisan legislation before us today.*

*“Yet, Democrats are pushing H.R. 7310, which will harm workers, retirees, and taxpayers. Specifically, it will make it more difficult for workers and retirees to access their savings during emergencies and hardships. Americans shouldn’t have to jump through complex hoops just to access their own money during an emergency. Even Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee Chair Patty Murray (D-WA) has identified the need for more information on the Democrats’ spousal consent provisions.*

*“Also concerning is the fact that this legislation would expand the role of the federal government in retirement planning—again always expanding the role of the federal government. H.R. 7310 establishes new grant programs, directing taxpayer dollars to specific types of retirement plan programs over others. But the bill text is ambiguous leaving open to interpretation what types of organizations may receive these taxpayer funds.*

*“The automatic reenrollment provision in H.R. 7310 is a wrong-headed government-knows-best approach. The Securing a Strong Retirement Act already includes a provision requiring new retirement plans to enroll employees into the plan automatically, but the Democrats’ bill would automatically reenroll participants who have already made the proactive decision to opt out. This will create unnecessary confusion and complications for America’s workforce and job creators.*

*“Our Committee has proven that we can work together and come up with comprehensive and effective bipartisan legislation. Last week’s major success on the House Floor was proof of that. Unfortunately, these bills miss the mark and for that reason I cannot support them.”*