



COMMITTEE STATEMENT

**AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY
July 26, 2017**

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**Opening Statement of Rep. Brett Guthrie (R-KY)
Chairman, Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development
Hearing on "Expanding Options for Employers and Workers Through Earn-and-Learn Opportunities."**

Good morning, 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 apprenticeships and opportunities for us to grow our nation's workforce. I'd especially like to welcome Ms. Stacey Hughes, a constituent of mine who serves as the state chair of the Kentucky Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education, or KYFAME, and Mr. Robert Peglow, a Kentucky student participating in KYFAME. I look forward to hearing from you about how Kentucky is working to help young people get the skills they need to obtain good-paying jobs.

Every day hardworking Americans search for a good-paying job that will lead them to a successful career. Many Americans find a pathway to a good-paying job through apprenticeship programs that provide real earn-and-learn opportunities that often turn into careers.

For workers, apprenticeships are a chance to prepare for today's high-skilled, in-demand jobs alongside long-time industry professionals. In fact, based on the National Household Education Survey, an estimated 2.1 million Americans participated in apprenticeships last year.

Employers also see apprenticeships as an outlet to invest in work-based learning programs that attract and help to retain highly qualified employees, and many have seen the results in the form of increased productivity and greater innovation.

Our hearing today will explore how apprenticeship-style programs promote workforce development, while also looking at federal programs that are in need of improvement.

One aspect of apprenticeships where this committee sees room for improvement in order to help workers and employers is "registered" apprenticeships.

Currently, registered apprenticeships are programs officially "registered" with the Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship (OA) or a state office of apprenticeship.

The Department of Labor has issued regulations requiring that registered apprenticeships meet **twenty-six specific requirements** relating to program design. DOL regulations also require that these programs adhere to equal employment opportunity regulations that are specific to apprenticeships.

(More)

While the department continues to regulate the registered apprenticeship program, workers and businesses are not convinced this program is something that is best for workforce development.

In 2016, only 206,000 individuals nationwide became apprentices through the registered apprenticeship program. Further, less than half of earn-and-learn programs choose to register their programs with the Department of Labor.

The registered apprenticeship program is yet another one-size-fits-all approach that works better for Washington than it does for businesses and students who wish to use apprenticeships as a way to grow our workforce.

Rather than doubling down on the failed attempts of previous administrations to expand the registered apprenticeship program, this committee is looking for a better way to build on the successful efforts businesses have found to grow their own apprenticeship programs outside of the registered apprenticeships program.

It should be noted that any effort to promote apprenticeship opportunities needs to provide employees and job creators with the flexibility to innovate and develop high quality earn-and-learn programs without the burdens of Washington overreach.

This has been the approach of the committee in our many efforts to strengthen workforce development this Congress, and it will continue to be our approach for the future.

Today's hearing is part of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce's ongoing efforts to strengthen our workforce for the future, and it is even more important in the realm of apprenticeships now that the White House has taken note of the true success apprenticeship programs are having for workers and employers alike.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today on how they have been able to create their own innovative apprenticeship programs, and how we can strengthen these efforts to help close the skills gap that exists in our country.

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U.S. House Committee on Education and the Workforce