



COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION & LABOR
REPUBLICANS

COMMITTEE
STATEMENT

**Opening Statement of Rep. Lloyd Smucker (R-PA), Republican Leader
Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment Hearing:
“The Future of Work: Ensuring Workers are Competitive in a Rapidly Changing
Economy”
December 18, 2019**

(As prepared for delivery)

“Today, we are here to discuss the future of work and how we can ensure workers are competitive in a rapidly changing economy.

Here’s the good news. American workers are benefitting from a strong economy ushered in by Republican pro-growth policies. Wages are on the rise, jobs are being created, and unemployment is at a 50-year low.

Thanks to this thriving economy, displacement rates are lower than they have been in years. Numbers from the Bureau of Labor Statistics illustrate that job separations today are largely voluntary.

However, displacement continues to occur and it will be unavoidable as technology evolves and the skills needed to compete in the labor market change.

While we must acknowledge the problems associated with displacement and work to address them, our first step must be to provide workers with the skills they need to get off the sidelines and into one of the millions of jobs open today across the nation.

According to a 2018 survey of U.S. employers, nearly half of all job creators struggle to hire employees with the right skills for the job, which has led to seven million unfilled positions throughout the country and a substantial skills gap that plagues our workforce. Earlier this year this committee heard from Daniel Pianko,

co-founder and managing director of University Ventures, a company working to transform the pathway from higher education to employment. Pianko said in his testimony, 'The skills gap is exacting a heavy toll on American families and institutions. It is impeding economic growth, promoting generational inequity, jeopardizing the American Dream, and creating real anxiety about the future of work.'

Fortunately, we know that skills-based education, like apprenticeships, are proven to help address the growing skills gap we currently face.

That is why my Republican colleagues and I have taken steps to advance work-based learning opportunities, including further integrating our education and workforce development systems so we can provide workers with the skills necessary to fill the millions of unfilled jobs nationwide. These efforts will aid all workers, including displaced workers.

Thanks to the Trump administration, the Task Force on Apprenticeship Expansion is also working on solving the issues that put up barriers and bureaucratic red tape for those who wish to develop apprenticeship programs. Specifically, the task force recommended giving businesses greater flexibility in their apprenticeship programs to meet the varying needs of different industries. After all, employers know what skills their employees need to excel in the workplace.

We should build on these successes by advancing policies that make it more attractive and easier to invest in workers.

Rather than promoting policies that burden businesses and drive up costs, Committee Republicans will continue to champion reforms that expand opportunities for flexibility, innovation, and entrepreneurship to give workers and job-seekers opportunities to compete successfully in the 21st century economy.

I want to thank the witnesses for coming today and I look forward to hearing from them."

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