



## COMMITTEE STATEMENT

Opening Statement of Rep. Tim Walberg (R-MI), Chairman  
Education and Workforce Committee  
“Building an AI-Ready America”  
January 14, 2026

(As prepared for delivery)

Artificial intelligence is scaling rapidly, and as a result, it is increasingly shaping how we learn, how we work, and how we prepare for the future. Today’s hearing examines AI and its growing role in education, workforce development, and the future of work.

Artificial intelligence is often described as a sudden disruption, but many of its underlying technologies have existed for decades. What has changed is the scale and accessibility of these tools. Rapid advancements have made AI systems easier to use and more widely available—reaching classrooms, workforce training programs, and workplaces across the country.

AI’s potential benefits are significant. AI tools are already helping teachers reduce administrative burdens, better personalize learning, and free up more time to engage directly with students. For workers, AI can help build new skills, increase efficiency, and accelerate on-the-job learning. As a result, employers can expect productivity gains that contribute to economic growth. An estimated 40 percent of GDP could be significantly affected by generative AI, which could mean a permanent increase in economic activity.

That said, AI growth is not without challenges. Models can make mistakes. In education, that raises concerns about academic integrity and overreliance. In the workforce, early evidence suggests AI may change how tasks are performed, particularly for entry-level roles, which underscores the need for strong pathways into the labor market and strong skills development. It is also important to recognize that many labor laws and regulations have not kept pace with how quickly work is changing, and they too often make it harder for businesses to offer benefits and flexibility.

With the rapid pace of technological change, workers are seeking greater freedom and flexibility in how they work. This highlights the need for clearer standards for independent work and more flexible benefit models that better serve a modern, mobile workforce. Today, more than 70 million workers operate as self-employed independent contractors, yet the federal government too often does not provide the statutory clarity that these workers need and deserve. In our current age of rapid technological growth, including AI-related development, our policies must adapt to the growing role of independent work.

As this Committee considers AI, we must recognize that many existing education and workforce policies were designed for a different era. The goal should not be to rush into sweeping new rules and regulations, but to ensure schools, employers, and training providers can keep pace with innovation while maintaining trust and prioritizing safety and privacy.

U.S. leadership in AI is pivotal to the nation's economic success and security. The Trump administration understands that this leadership requires an AI-ready workforce supported by strong classroom instruction and on-the-job learning that make the most of cutting-edge technology.

Today we have the opportunity to better understand how AI is being and could be used in education and workforce systems, where it is delivering

value, and where challenges remain. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.