

**SUPPORTING QUALITY WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES
AND INNOVATION TO ADDRESS
BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT**

HEARING
OF THE
**COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS**
UNITED STATES SENATE
ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

EXAMINING SUPPORTING QUALITY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT OPPOR-
TUNITIES AND INNOVATION TO ADDRESS BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

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FEBRUARY 15, 2022
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C O N T E N T S

STATEMENTS

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2022

Page

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Murray, Hon. Patty, Chair, Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, Opening statement	1
Burr, Hon. Richard, Ranking Member, a U.S. Senator from the State of North Carolina, Opening statement	3

WITNESSES

Mack, Melinda, Executive Director, New York Association of Training and Employment Professionals, Albany, NY	6
Prepared statement	7
Summary statement	11
Watts, Ashli, President & CEO, Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, Frankfort, KY	12
Prepared statement	13
Summary statement	16
Beard, Peter, Senior Vice President for Regional Workforce Development, Greater Houston Partnership, Houston, TX	17
Prepared statement	18
Summary statement	22
Sherard-Freeman, Nicole, Group Executive, Jobs, Economy & Detroit at Work, City of Detroit, Detroit, MI	22
Prepared statement	24
Summary statement	28

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Tuesday, February 15, 2022

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:05 a.m., in room 216, Hart Senate Office Building, Hon. Patty Murray, Chair of the Committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Murray [presiding], Casey, Murphy, Kaine, Hassan, Smith, Rosen, Hickenlooper, Burr, Cassidy, Braun, Marshall, and Tuberville.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR MURRAY

The CHAIR. Good morning. The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee will please come to order. Today we are holding a hearing on supporting our workforce and addressing systemic barriers to employment. I will have an opening statement, followed by Senator Burr, and then we will introduce our witnesses.

After the witnesses give their testimony, Senators will each have 5 minutes for a round of questions. And while we were again unable to have this hearing fully opened to the public or media for in-person attendance, live video with closed captioning is available on our Committee website at *help.senate.gov*.

If you are in need of any other accommodations, you can reach out to the Committee or the Office of Congressional Accessibility Services. We continue to see a high number of new COVID cases, so we are having this hearing in a larger room where we can be socially distanced, limiting the number of people who are in the room, and accommodating both some of our Committee Members and witnesses through video as we have done previously, and taking additional measures such as wearing masks. As always, I really do appreciate the work from the staff, of the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Architect of the Capitol, and our Committee Clerk and his staff to make this hearing as safe as possible.

Our Nation has made great progress rebuilding our economy from the COVID-19 crisis. We have seen the highest economic growth in nearly four decades, added a record 6 million jobs last year, and saw the biggest annual improvement in employment since we started collecting data. But our work is not done, and that

is especially clear when we look at how unequal this crisis and the recovery so far have been and how that has compounded the inequities that existed before the pandemic.

The unemployment rate for Black workers is still twice the rate for white workers, and Black and Latino workers were both nearly twice as likely as white workers to report losing income last month. Meanwhile, women have accounted for almost two-thirds of jobs lost during this pandemic, and we heard last week about the challenges people with disabilities face in the workplace and the need to make sure they can get competitive integrated job opportunities, gain financial independence, and participate more fully in our communities. These inequities are holding our Country back.

We can't build back stronger when our economy leaves out people who are ready and willing to take on good jobs. We can't build back fairer when people who want to learn new skills and seek better jobs continue to face discrimination because of their race or their age or their income or their disability, or because their primary language is not English. And we can't build an economy that works for working families when a single parent cannot afford childcare so they can go to a job or participate in a workforce development program, or when workers who can't afford to invest in new skills and get the jobs they want simply because they can't afford textbooks or transportation or tuition, or to even take time off from their current job to take a class at a local community college or pursue their higher education goals.

Of course, these barriers don't just hold back working families. They hold back businesses who are looking for workers to take on good paying jobs, and then our economy as a whole. As we recover from this pandemic, we have to do so much better than simply returning to a normal that wasn't working for working families. If we want to rebuild an economy that works for everyone, we need to tear down the systemic barriers that stand between so many people and the opportunities they need to gain new skills, get better jobs, and support their families.

That is why our Nation's workforce development programs are so important. High quality, work based learning, registered apprenticeships, and other workforce development programs can help people grow in their careers or develop new skills and start a new career. And when workforce development programs provide assistance with transportation and housing and childcare, help getting work gear like uniforms and tools, accommodations for people with disabilities, and other support to help people overcome barriers, they ensure that everyone can access the opportunities that will help them succeed.

In a national survey of workforce development program administrators, nearly all of them said supportive services were important for program retention and completion. In fact, program administrators who reported they were able to meet these needs, saw four out of five participants complete their programs. For those who couldn't meet these needs, reported completion rates of less than one in three. Those numbers make clear how transformative workers centered practices and support can be.

I have seen in my home State of Washington what happens when people have access to workforce development programs that under-

stand and tackle the barriers between them and a high quality job. When Ali lost his job during the pandemic, the African community housing and development in South Seattle helped him get financial aid, enroll in classes at Highline Community College, get a part time job at an airline, and set him out on a new high quality career path in aviation.

When Rosa Linda, who is a single parent in Yakima, wanted to improve her credentials and increase her pay, the public workforce system helped her enroll in Yakima Valley College, work on her resume writing and job interview skills, and then get a new, better paying job in teaching. She no longer worries, she says, about putting food on the table and was excited to be able to afford holiday gifts for her family this year. And across Washington State, the Aerospace Joint Apprenticeship Committee offers registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs, including to young people who have been impacted by the justice system.

These programs give young people who often have no work history the opportunity and support to build the real world experience and skills and industry connections they need to set out on new, high quality careers.

Not only have I heard so many other stories from Washington State about the importance of these programs, I have seen it first-hand. When I was growing up, my family was able to make it through very hard times because my mom was provided the support and opportunity to go back to school, get training, and ultimately get a paying—higher paying job that allowed her and our family to succeed. That made a huge difference for all of us.

Many families today have had the rug completely pulled out from under them by this pandemic, and I want to make sure they have the same opportunities that my mom did. So I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about what we can do to continue tearing down barriers and building back our Country stronger and fairer. And I am proud to say we do have a bipartisan track record on workforce issues, like when we passed the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act in 2014 and when we reauthorized the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act in 2018.

I know this remains a priority for everyone on this Committee. So I hope we can continue to make progress, both by strengthening programs that help workers overcome barriers, and also by addressing some of the systemic issues that create barriers in the first place, like racism, sexism, ageism, and other forms of discrimination, poverty, barriers to workers organizing and collective bargaining, inadequate accommodations for people with disabilities, and a lack of paid leave, child care and other policies that help makes things a little easier on working families. With that, I will turn it over to Senator Burr for his opening remarks.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR BURR

Senator BURR. Thank you, Madam Chair. I am glad we are having this hearing today. I want to welcome our witnesses for being here to testify. I am glad to see we have some who would join us in the hearing room. Madam Chair, with the District of Columbia changing their COVID guidelines effective today, where they no longer require proof of vaccination to enter a building, and with

their proposed February 28th of the elimination of an indoor mask mandate, I do hope that the Committee will return to our regular in-person hearings very soon.

We are here to talk about America's workforce. This is an important topic. We are in a period of great economic uncertainty. The pandemic has changed a lot of the ways that we live and work. Thanks to extravagant spending in Washington, American families are facing 40 year high inflation rates and paychecks are increasingly stretched to put food on the table, gas in the car. Plain and simple, this is a tax on working class. Looking forward to the discussion today to hear more about the ways that we can support pathways to good paying jobs.

With all the changes to our economy, now more than ever it is time for us to think about innovative solutions. Everyone is here—everyone here is interested in finding ways to reduce barriers to employment. But the Biden administration seems to be creating their own barriers to employment. Look no further than the partisan nominee at the Department of Labor, David Weil, is the president's pick to lead the Wage and Hour Division. This is a nominee with a track record of stifling innovation and opposing growth opportunities.

His nomination is a threat to the gig economy, independent contracting, and the franchise model for businesses of which many or minority and women owned. I can't imagine the threat of putting this type of leadership at the Department of Labor, and it instills—and the lack of confidence that it instills in employers. This Administration also seems to be creating barriers to new training opportunities. Something we should all be able to agree on is the importance of high quality workforce training and education.

This includes apprenticeships. Instead of focusing on how to expand the apprenticeship models, building on what works, the Department of Labor is actually working on eliminating a pathway. Industry recognized apprenticeships are a promising way to expand the earn and learn model in new industries and to reach new population of workers. Instead of building on this innovative idea or working with Republicans on how to improve it, this Administration has paused the recognition process.

If we are going to address barriers to employment, we should be using all the tools in our toolbox, not just the tools that labor unions find acceptable. The White House also wants to put up roadblocks for people who want to work. As businesses were adjusting to the pandemic, the president issued a vaccine mandate. Make no mistake, I encourage every American who is eligible to get vaccinated and to get boosted against COVID. But amid labor shortages, supply chain issues, an already strained workforce, this mandate is the last thing we needed.

The sweeping new requirement far exceeded OSHA's legal authority, and the Supreme Court was right to block it. We have to find solutions to keep people in their jobs, schools and businesses open. I also think we can all agree that Americans can't work or go to school if they don't have safe and reliable childcare for their families. Instead of seeking workable bipartisan solutions, my friends on the other side of the aisle insisted to do it themselves in a reckless partisan spending bill.

Only in Washington would the answers be to create even more complicated and just disjointed programs, rather than to do the simple thing, fund a program that works and that has had bipartisan support for decades. Talking about the childcare development block grants. Barbara Mikulski and I led the reauthorization of this program in a bill that overwhelmingly passed the Senate in the House with bipartisan support. We can do this again. It doesn't need to be partisan, it needs to be smart. If we are going to find workable and lasting solutions, we have got to find them together.

Today's topic has long been an area with support from both sides of the aisle. I am looking forward to the hearing from—hearing from our witnesses today about how they are providing access to opportunity to workers in their communities. This work doesn't happen in silos. Collaboration among stakeholders is absolutely crucial. This includes business education providers, workers, and Government.

This collaboration is not always easy. I expect some of the barriers that we identified today will come with well-informed Federal policy. Well-intentioned Federal policy, excuse me. We have an opportunity to think outside the box and find ways to better support the innovative strategies we see at the state and local levels. Madam Chair, I hope we are smart enough to listen today. I thank the Chair.

The CHAIR. Thank you, Senator Burr. I will now introduce today's witnesses. And our first witness is Melinda Mack, the Executive Director of the New York Association of Training and Employment Professionals, a nationally recognized association focused on poverty, education, job training, and economic workforce development in New York. Thank you for joining us today, Ms. Mack. Look forward to your testimony. Our next witness is Ashley Watts. Ms. Watts is the President and CEO of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce.

The Chamber is the largest business association in the state, representing 3,800 businesses which employ over half of the state's workforce. Ms. Watts, appreciate you joining us today to share your time and expertise. We will also be hearing from Peter Beard, the Senior Vice President for Regional Workforce Development for the Greater Houston Partnership. Mr. Beard leads the partnership's upscale Houston initiative, a business led effort that engages more than 200 employers, educational institutes, community based organizations in the workforce system.

Mr. Beard, thank you so much for joining us today. Look forward to your testimony. Finally, we are also joined by Nicole Sherard-Freeman, the Group Executive for Jobs, Economy and Detroit at Work for the city of Detroit. In this role, she tackles both the city's economic and workforce development functions to attract and retain businesses and provide pathways for workers' success in the job market. Ms. Sherard-Freeman, grateful to have you with us. Look forward to your insights today.

We will begin with Ms. Mack for your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF MELINDA MACK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NEW YORK ASSOCIATION OF TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT PROFESSIONALS, ALBANY, NY

Ms. MACK. Good morning, Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr, the Members of the Senate HELP Committee. My name is Linda Mack. I am the Executive Director of New York Association of Training and Employment Professionals, which is New York's Workforce Development Association. We were founded in the late 1970's and we represent every county in the state, and our membership includes local workforce boards, career centers, as well as union training funds, community colleges, youth and adult literacy, education, job training, and employment service providers.

Collectively, our members serve over a million New Yorkers each year. COVID-19 has laid bare that the labor market, as it has been designed, does not benefit all people equally. While many New Yorkers have lost their jobs, the glaring disproportionate negative impacts on people of color and individuals working in low wage work is unambiguous.

But even as the labor market recovers, labor market participation is still lagging. And as the great resignation has made headlines, many workers are unable to take higher paying jobs due to the lack of access for foundational skills and technical skills or additional supports like childcare and transportation.

As reported by our partners at the United Way of New York, our state—in our state, about 45 percent of working households are living at or beneath the basic cost of living, putting them one flat tire away from not being able to put food on the table. The inability to meet basic needs means that these individuals do not have the resources to pay for or to step out of work, to take a training course at a community college, or to pay for that childcare that they would need in order to be able to complete.

It also means that in classroom, or on the job requirements of an apprenticeship are beyond their grasp. It doesn't have to be this way. For example, the local workforce board in Chautauqua has been engaging a number of long term unemployed individuals, including those who struggle to access family sustaining jobs. They are currently working to provide paid, on the job training through the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act, or WIOA, and advanced manufacturing, allowing earning and learning to occur simultaneously. It is a benefit to the individual and a benefit to the employer.

This, coupled with wraparound supports from the local career center, and individualized job coaching will ensure participants can handle any hurdles that come their way and also so that they can stay in training and then on the job. If I am boiling it down to what Congress can do to help to ensure this is an equitable economic recovery, I would share the following. First, our Nation must invest in workforce development at the scale and scope of the need.

The Federal funding through WIOA is a catalyst for public and private investment, regional coordination through the local workforce boards, and workforce system alignment across the country and certainly in our state, where half a million New Yorkers engage in the American job centers each year. This is not about college or no college. It is about having the skills you need for a good

paying job for today and for tomorrow. Second, understand the impact and value of wraparound support services.

Services like childcare, transportation, access to current navigation, resume writing, and case management are often the difference between a worker succeeding and a training program and being able to keep a job. Third, support industry or sector partnerships to include increasing employment opportunities for workers. In the North Country, Schluter Systems has struggled to attract and retain workers at all levels. Their CEO has shared the industry 4.0 now requires the company to attract talent at a higher skill level while upskilling their existing workforce.

In the last 2 years, three machine shops have closed, forcing a company to find new ways to expand in-house knowledge. To that end, Schluter Systems is currently working with the North Country Workforce Board and Regional Economic Development Partners and education partners as an active participant in building the solution, by creating a youth oriented work experience called the Authentic STEM program.

Modeled after the German Youth Apprenticeship Program, this company believes it will be an essential model for their ability to generate a pipeline of local workers for their company and supply chain. And finally, support learning on the job, including high quality workplace learning for youth and adults, registered apprenticeship, and incumbent worker training. This is particularly important for disadvantaged individuals with immediate financial needs.

The Center for Employment Opportunities, who works with those returning home from incarceration, has identified a daily wage in coaching as stabilizing factors for participants success. By way of example, at the Buffalo site, CEO has partnered with a window manufacturer to employ participants in transitional jobs. Their participants utilize hand tools to build windows and frames and develop soft skills, and the employer works with these recruits and now has a dedicated source to hire full time workers into good union paying jobs.

In conclusion, a sustained economic prosperity for all Americans is a priority. Focusing on getting people the skills they need to do a good job or to get into a good job could not come at a more opportune time. Local workforce boards and their partners are at the front lines of creating hope, but they are also driving the solutions for a better future.

I described a bit of what is being done here on the ground. Now imagine what the impact could be if we doubled down on this effort on America's economic competitiveness. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss these issues. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Mack follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MELINDA MACK

Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr, and Members of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pension Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share with you my experience working through the public workforce and postsecondary education systems to address workers' need and business demand.

My name is Melinda Mack. I am the Executive Director of the New York Association of Training & Employment Professionals.¹ Founded in the late 1970's, our association represents every county in the State, and includes federally funded local workforce boards, union training funds, community colleges, literacy, education, job training, and employment service providers. Collectively, our members serve over a million New Yorkers each year.

Before COVID-19 the debate that rallied elected officials and educators was the "Future of Work", automation, and its impact on jobs. However, COVID-19 has laid bare what has been true all along—the labor market, as it has been designed, does not benefit all people equally. We saw mass unemployment rivaling the Great Depression, and while many New Yorkers have lost their jobs, the glaring disproportionate negative impacts for people of color and individuals working in low wage jobs is unambiguous.

As you know over 3.3 million people have filed for unemployment insurance nationally, the highest number since the government began tracking in 1967, and five times the prior record set in 1982. However, according to the JOLTS data, even as the labor market recovers, labor force participation is still lagging. New York's labor force participation was around 61 percent pre-pandemic and is now hovering around 59.8 percent. The New York Times reported last month that a record number of Americans were quitting their jobs, primarily concentrated in low-wage sectors, such as hospitality and food services, making employers desperate to hire and raising wages to attract more workers.

At the same time, workers lack access to foundational and technical skills in our talent pool. In our state 40 percent of people have a high school diploma or less. The COVID-19 crisis has underscored the need to immediately address worker hardships, and the need to support the transition back to employment.

Millions of New Yorkers have lost their paychecks and savings, and therefore are calculating the costs of childcare, technology, transportation, etc. which need to be in place to return to work and keep the job. As reported by our partners at the United Way, in New York 45 percent of households are living at or beneath the basic cost of living, putting them one flat tire away from not being able to put food on the table. Nearly 1.5 million working households in New York were unable to meet their most basic needs in 2019. To make ends meet, a single parent in the Bronx with a baby and a preschooler needs to earn about \$95,000—three times the minimum wage in New York City. And while a similar family could get by on much less in Syracuse, the \$58,000 a year they'd need is still double the minimum wage in Onondaga County.

The inability to meet basic needs means these families do not have resources to pay for a training course at a community college or to pay for extra childcare during class time. It means the in-classroom and on the job requirements of a registered apprenticeship are beyond their grasp, despite the strong outcomes for workers and businesses from this model. And it means public policy is not doing enough for families around the country to enable them to fill good jobs for which businesses are hiring.

As we learned during the last Recession, even as the economy improves, it doesn't improve for everyone equally. As reported by Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce in *America's Divided Recovery: College Haves and Have-Nots, 2016*, people with a high school diploma or less did not rebound following the last recession. Workers with a bachelor's degree or higher gained over 8.4 million jobs in the recovery, whereas those with a high school diploma or less gained a mere 80,000.

The crisis also had a disproportionate impact on women and workers of color in New York. Lessons from past economic downturns show that Black and Hispanics/Latino workers, and women are likely to experience greater job losses and recover wages and assets more slowly. Data from early 2021 indicated similar trends maybe happening in the COVID-19 recovery. Additionally, the Schuyler Center has reported that over the past year, more than 1,200 child care providers have closed permanently, pushing child care into a crisis leading to more women, in particular women of color, stepping out of employment to care for children.

Taken together, this means tens of thousands of New Yorkers need access to training and the supports necessary to succeed in that training to ensure our recovery from the pandemic is equitable.

¹ <https://www.nyatep.org/#:text=NYATEP%20increases%20the%20knowledge%2Dbase-enhance%20the%20delivery%20of%20services.>

The good news is the public workforce, adult education and career and technical education systems are poised to help people successfully train for and find new jobs. Nationally, and in New York, workforce development does not have a one size fits all, however. Our system has extensive reach, and in New York alone, under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I service program, the system serves over 224,000 Adults; 677,000 Dislocated Workers; and 6,300 Youth in PY20.

An equitable recovery will mean not just serving these workers, though, it will mean addressing the varied barriers that prevent them from finding good jobs today. Those most impacted by the COVID-19 Recession have been lower-income people of color and immigrants. Structural racism has shaped labor market policies, including skills policies, that contributed to those inequities before and during the pandemic. Skills and re-employment policies should purposefully improve both opportunities and outcomes for workers of color coming out of this recession.

Effective models and workforce strategies that can serve as a model for congressional action to address workers need and business demand:

Invest in workforce development at the scope and scale necessary to meet worker need and business demand.

The Federal funding through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, also known as WIOA, is the catalyst for public and private investment, regional coordination, and workforce system alignment across the country, and certainly in our state, where a half million New Yorkers engage the American Job Centers each year.

Local workforce boards must actively match the right resources to the right talent by working with partners to address barriers that prevent individuals from being able to access and succeed in good jobs.

Over the past two decades, public investment in WIOA has declined by 40 percent.² This means going into the pandemic our public workforce system already lacked necessary resources. To date, Congress has not invested meaningfully in workforce as part of any economic stimulus package.³

Our international peers have, though. According to a report from the Council for Economic Advisors, the United States would need to invest \$80 billion annually just to reach the median of that spent on these programs by other industrial countries.⁴ Instead, we rank below every other international peer in investment in workforce, exceeding only that made by Mexico.

New York has suffered the long-term trend of disinvestment in workforce development through falling Federal appropriations. Twenty years ago, Congress appropriated \$4.86 billion, and as of 2020 that funding has dropped to \$2.79 billion, nearly half of what it was in 2001. Notwithstanding, adhoc infusions of Federal funding as a result of a natural disaster or recession are no substitute for a long-term, state-wide strategy to invest in and grow New York's skilled workforce.⁵

This underinvestment means workers can't access training and it means our public workforce system doesn't have the resources necessary to help people be successful in that training.

Invest in and prioritize wrap around support services so workers can succeed in both training programs and in a new job.

For workers who have been out of a job or underemployed, job training is a critical part of their pathway to a good job. In order to ensure workers have success in this training, however, the public workforce system must provide access to wrap-around support services like childcare, transportation.

In our state 40 percent of people have a high school diploma or less and many more lack the additional supports like childcare and transportation needed to move out of low-wage work. Right now, local areas can invest in strategies like support services, but lack of adequate funding often makes it impossible.

Strategies like childcare, transportation, access to career navigation and case management and continued access to benefits provided under other human resource programs like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental

² <https://nationalskillscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Funding-Cuts-Fact-Sheet-March2019.pdf>.

³ <https://nationalskillscoalition.org/blog/future-of-work/congress-is-on-the-verge-of-making-historic-investments-in-workforce/>.

⁴ <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Addressing-Americas-Reskilling-Challenge.pdf>.

⁵ <https://s3.amazonaws.com/kajabi-storefronts-production/sites/181530/themes/3772146/downloads/v4PzHjpKRQGwhgBiRnRe-A-NEW-WAY-FORWARD-REPORT.pdf>.

Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) are often the difference between a worker succeeding in a training program that leads to a good job and them being unable to compete.

In pilot programs launched by the New York City Human Resources Administration, public assistance recipients are connected to private sector and public sector subsidized employment and receive work readiness, job training and wrap-around work supports. The participants earn wages over the course of 6 months, with no negative impact to their benefits. Around half of the participants, who would have otherwise remained unemployed, have connected to unsubsidized work.

Federal support to cover the costs of childcare continue to be necessary in our state, both to address childcare needs and to focus on alleviating the need for childcare workers.

Support sector-based training models and industry or sector partnerships to bring businesses of all size together with education providers and increase employment opportunities for workers.

Over the past 2 years, businesses have had to be nimble and responsive to changes across industries. Under WIOA, states are required to support local industry or sector partnerships, but there is no dedicated money to help them do this. These partnerships bring together education providers, local businesses, labor and labor management partnerships, community-based organizations and organizations that serve workers with barriers to employment. The most sophisticated also engage organizations that work with communities of color or others who have been disproportionately impacted by the current crisis and the impact of systemic racism and previous policy decisions.

In a state like New York, a lack of Federal investment in these partnerships means that we are limited in our ability to convene businesses with education partners, meaning fewer workers have the benefit of that collaboration.

Just as the impacts of the pandemic have been felt differently between different sectors, and even on different size businesses within each sector, our workforce responses need to be just as industry specific. As we develop forward looking workforce strategies, policies should invest in and empower sector partnerships that are driven by industry stakeholders, including smaller businesses that are often the primary employer in local communities. These partnerships, in addition to addressing local training needs, should also support the diversity and inclusion efforts of local employers.

Again, where we are able to, though, we can see it work.

In the rural region of the Southern Tier there is an extreme shortage of machinists. This same area also has unemployment that exceeds the levels in other part of our state and workers consistently face difficulty finding childcare. In response to business demand, the local workforce board, the regional adult education provider and a state funded workforce intermediary partnered with four local businesses to design an accelerated machining training program. The program invested Federal WIOA funding to provide individualized case management to ensure workers could navigate the program and access public resources to support childcare needs. WIOA funds were available for workforce readiness training through the American Job Centers; contextualized adult basic education to accelerate skill acquisition and address literacy and numeracy deficiencies; all while deeply engaging the employers in curriculum development and program design. The partnership has grown to 14 employers, and at a minimal cost of around \$5,500 per participant and has returned more than \$800,000 in wages back to the regional economy. To date, more than [xx] workers have been employed with businesses in this partnership and succeeded in jobs with family sustaining wages.

Congress should also take steps to make sure that sector-based training models are accessible to workers who have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, including workers of color, immigrants, and women. Public investments in sector partnerships should include resources, technical assistance, and policy guidance that support advancing racial equity and inclusion in local companies.

Support learning on the job, including work-based learning, apprenticeship, and incumbent worker training.

Work-based learning that combines instruction at a worksite during paid employment with classroom education, and that culminates in an industry-recognized credential ensures workers obtain skills and credentials while earning a wage. Registered apprenticeship is a great example of this model, with strong wage and employment outcomes for workers and improved retention and engagement outcomes

for industry. This is especially important for disadvantaged individuals with immediate financial needs.

In the Adirondacks of New York, international company Schluter Systems has struggled to attract and retain workers at all levels. Their Chief Operating Officer shared with me recently that Industry 4.0 and the “internet of things” is causing a huge shift in the skills necessary at all levels, so not only has it become a challenge to attract people to manufacturing, now they must attract talent with a higher skill level at the same time as up-skilling their existing workforce. He shared that in the last 2 years, three machine shops have closed down, forcing the company to find ways to expand in-house knowledge. To solve this problem, Schluter Systems is currently working with the North County Workforce Board and regional education partners as an “active participant in building the solution” by creating a youth-oriented, work experience program called *The Authentic STEM* program. Modeled after the German youth apprenticeship, Schluter believes it will be an excellent sectoral model to generate a pipeline of local workers for Schluter and their supply chain, with experience working on real industrial problems, strong communication and problem solving skills. The programs will co-invest funding from industry and WIOA to support career exploration for middle schoolers and real world work experience for high school-aged students.

In conclusion, if sustained economic prosperity for America and all U.S. workers is a priority, focusing on getting people the skills they need for a good job could not come at a more opportune time. Local workforce boards and their partners including employers, postsecondary institutions, nonprofits and career and technical education programs, are at the front lines creating solutions, and they are creating hope for a better future. I’ve described a snapshot of what is being done on the ground, now imagine what the impact would be on America’s economic competitiveness if we could double down on these efforts. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss these issues today. Please consider us a resource if we can be of any help.

[SUMMARY STATEMENT OF MELINDA MACK]

My name is Melinda Mack. I am the Executive Director of the New York Association of Training and Employment Professionals.¹ Collectively, our members serve over a million New Yorkers each year.

Over the past 2 years, millions of New Yorkers have lost their paychecks and savings, and therefore are calculating the costs of childcare, technology, transportation, etc. which need to be in place to return to work and keep the job. As reported by our partners at the United Way, in New York 45 percent of households are living at or beneath the basic cost of living, putting them one flat tire away from not being able to put food on the table.

As we learned during the last Recession, even as the economy improves, it doesn’t improve for everyone equally. Workers with a bachelor’s degree or higher gained over 8.4 million jobs in the recovery, whereas those with a high school diploma or less gained a mere 80,000.

The crisis also had a disproportionate impact on women and workers of color in New York. Lessons from past economic downturns show that Black and Hispanics/Latino workers, and women are likely to experience greater job losses and recover wages and assets more slowly.

Our public workforce system is poised to address worker and business needs, but Federal policy and investments are critical to ensuring the system can best serve all workers, especially those with barriers to employment.

Effective models and workforce strategies that can serve as a model for congressional action to address workers need and business demand:

- ***Invest in workforce development at the scope and scale necessary to meet worker need and business demand***
- ***Invest in and prioritize wrap around support services so workers can succeed in both training programs and in a new job***
- ***Support sector-based training models and industry or sector partnerships to bring businesses of all size together with education providers and increase employment opportunities for workers***

¹ <https://www.nyatep.org/#:text=NYATEP%20increases%20the%20knowledge%2Dbase-enhance%20the%20delivery%20of%20services.>

- *Support learning on the job, including work-based learning, apprenticeship, and incumbent worker training*

The CHAIR. Thank you very much. Ms. Watts.

**STATEMENT OF ASHLI WATTS, PRESIDENT AND CEO,
KENTUCKY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, FRANKFORT, KY**

Ms. WATTS. Good morning, Chair Murray, Ranking Member Burr, and Members of the Committee. I am honored to be with you here today to discuss workforce, an issue every state is facing, and specifically how we can remove barriers. Almost 2 years after the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, thanks to help from Congress, including PPP loans, Federal relief packages, and a historic bipartisan infrastructure bill, our economy is on its way to recovery. However, we will not be able to ensure a full recovery until we have an active, engaged workforce.

As President of the Kentucky Chamber, the Commonwealth's largest business association, the No. 1 issue I hear about from businesses of all sizes, of all sectors are their struggles with workforce and finding employees. We often say we have too many people without jobs and too many jobs without people, and how do we make these two things match. And then the days of a somewhat divisive political climate, it is refreshing to be able to say that this issue really sees no side of the aisle, and we have worked with leaders from both parties toward solutions.

For the last several years, the Kentucky Chamber has been creating programs to provide employer led initiatives to develop, expand, and strengthen our workforce to support Kentucky's economy. I would briefly like to tell you about a few of these programs relevant to this Committee and topic. Like many states, in Kentucky we have struggled with high substance use disorder numbers as well as high levels of incarceration.

However, the Chamber and the business leaders understand a key to reducing recidivism is meaningful employment. With funding from both state government as well as private entities, the Chamber started our workforce recovery program, focused on engaging the business community as part of the solution to this epidemic by reducing the stigma and increasing second chance employment opportunities across Kentucky.

This program has built an employer network of over 1,200 employers and recruited almost 28,000 second chance opportunities statewide. Through this program, we also launched the Kentucky Transformation Employment Program last year. This program provides a pathway for businesses and employers to help more Kentuckians reach long term recovery while supporting second chance employment. Employers who choose to enroll in this program receive protections from civil action regarding negligent hiring and hiring because of an employee's substance use disorder through Kentucky statutes.

To date, 22 businesses have signed up for this program, which impacts more than 5,000 Kentucky employees. Another barrier those coming out of incarceration phase is something as simple as a lack of a proper state issued I.D. We realize that many Kentuckians were coming out of incarceration and leaving to reenter soci-

ety, and the only form of identification they had was their mug shot.

As you can imagine, this is not the form of ID one would want to have when trying to secure housing assistance or looking for a job. The Chamber, in partnership with the Just Trust, has started a pilot project in Kentucky to give those coming out of incarceration a state issued ID to help with their successful reentry. We are hopeful State Government will fund this program for all inmates in the future.

We know creating workforce opportunities starts at an early age. Knowing this, the Chamber launched a statewide initiative, Bus to Business, several years ago, focused on connecting K through 12 students across the state to career pathways and businesses in their communities. This program has been able to engage over 210 schools and over 110 businesses across Kentucky, impacting over 42,000 Kentucky students.

Students have the opportunity to tour companies, complete hands on work based learning opportunities, and speak directly to employers about career pathways available in their organizations. And the last program I want to highlight is the first workforce program the Chamber started to help create workforce pipelines for key industries.

Over 4 years ago, in partnership with the Kentucky Cabinet for Education and Workforce Development, Kentucky launched a statewide implementation of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation program, Talent Pipeline Management. Over the last 4 years, this program has been talent solutions for five of Kentucky's key industry sectors, engaged almost 300 employers, and connected more than 3,000 Kentuckians to jobs, training, or workplace learning opportunities.

In fact, this program has proven so successful, we have expanded our portfolio to include Kentucky's signature industries, equine and distilling, because you can't have Kentucky without bourbon and horses. As an example of the innovative solutions our equine employers are building, they have worked with the Blackburn Correctional Facility to create and implement the Workforce Readiness and Reentry Program, where inmates gain vocational and job skill training before connecting with career opportunities.

Following in the equine industry's footsteps, the Kentucky Distillers Association partnered with the Chamber to start a pilot project in 2021, which currently engages 15 distilling companies. Members of the Committee, as you know and I am sure you hear from your constituents, workforce is a multi-faceted problem that must have multifaceted solutions to remove barriers and create opportunities for everyone.

Thank you for the opportunity to share a little bit about how collaborative partnerships in Kentucky are benefiting all of our citizens' workforce and economy.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Watts follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ASHLI WATTS

Chair Murray, Ranking Member Burr, and Members of the Committee. I am honored to be here with you today to discuss an issue that every state is facing and that is workforce. Almost 2 years after the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, thanks to help from Congress including PPP loans, Federal relief packages, and a

historic bipartisan infrastructure bill, our economy is well on its way to recovery. However, we will not be able to ensure a full recovery until we have an active, engaged workforce.

Workforce has been a topic of concern for business leaders and policymakers for years, but interest in the issue has surged in the past 12 to 16 months. Driving this surge has been the collapse in employment that took place with the onset of the pandemic in Spring of 2020 followed by the nationwide struggle to find workers to help rebuild the U.S. economy. In April 2020, 23 million Americans were unemployed and the national unemployment rate soared to 14.8 percent (16.9 percent in Kentucky). One year later, surveys of employers showed a record number of businesses struggling to find workers, while the U.S. saw an unprecedented 9.2 million job openings.

No wonder workforce has been such a topic of interest lately. Something is amiss. The truth is that something has been amiss for a long time. As President of the Kentucky Chamber, the Commonwealth's largest business association, the No. 1 issue I hear from businesses across the state, of all sizes and sectors, are their struggles with workforce and finding employees. We often say "we have too many people without jobs and too many jobs without people and how do we make these two issues match?"

The pandemic and economic recovery have accelerated preexisting trends and magnified our weak points. This is especially the case in Kentucky, where the data tells us that since 2000 more and more Kentuckians have not been participating in the workforce. In fact, fewer adults in Kentucky participate in the workforce than in almost any other state in the Nation. Perhaps what is more concerning is that even once Kentucky fully restores its workforce to pre-pandemic levels—which is not a certainty—we will likely still be far behind the Nation and surrounding states. Kentucky's workforce challenges are exceptional, but they did not suddenly emerge in the age of COVID-19. Rather, they have been building and holding back our economy for at least two decades. There is no one singular cause of these challenges. Instead, the causes are many, and the solutions must be, as well.

I am pleased to be able to briefly highlight a few of the unique programs the Kentucky Chamber has spearheaded in collaboration with many partners to address the workforce issue and specifically how we remove barriers. And in the days of a somewhat divisive political climate, it is refreshing to be able to say that this issue really sees no side of the aisle, and we have worked with leaders from both parties toward solutions.

For the last several years, the Kentucky Chamber has been creating programs to provide employer-led initiatives to develop, expand, and strengthen our workforce to support Kentucky's economy. I would briefly like to tell you about a few of these programs that are relevant to this Committee and topic.

In Kentucky we have struggled with high substance use disorder numbers, as well as high levels of incarceration. However, the Chamber and business leaders understand a key to reducing recidivism is meaningful employment. With funding from both state government as well as private entities, the Chamber started our Workforce Recovery Program focusing on engaging the business community as part of the solution to this epidemic by reducing stigma and increasing second-chance employment opportunities across Kentucky. This program has built an employer network of over 1,200 employers and recruited almost 28,000 fair chance job opportunities statewide!

Through this program we launched the Kentucky Transformation Employment Program (KTEP) in September 2021. KTEP provides a pathway for businesses and employers to help more Kentuckians reach long-term recovery while supporting second chance employment. Employers who choose to enroll in the program receive protections from civil action regarding negligent hiring and hiring because of an employee's substance use disorder through KRS 222.215. To date, 22 Kentucky businesses have signed up for KTEP, which impacts more than 5,000 Kentucky employees.

Another barrier those coming out of incarceration face is something as simple as a lack of a proper state-issued ID. We realized that many Kentuckians coming out of incarceration are leaving to reenter society and the only form of identification they have is their mug shot. As you can imagine, this is not the form of ID one would want to use to secure housing, assistance or look for a job. The Chamber, in partnership with the Just Trust, has started a pilot project in Kentucky to give those coming out of incarceration a state-issued ID to help with their successful re-entry. We are hopeful state government will fund this program for all inmates in the future.

In March 2020, when we saw unemployment numbers skyrocket due to the pandemic, we launched a website to highlight the many open positions in all areas of the state. We would never have imagined this campaign would have resulted in 55,000 webpage visits and over 100,000 jobs posted by employers in a little over a year. Given this momentum, we launched Kentucky Talent Hub in October 2021 to create a more dynamic online experience for employers, job seekers, and workforce development professionals.

This online platform provides a space for employers to post opportunities and directly engage with applicants and job seekers. Employers across all industries post opportunities of any kind, including full-time, part-time, fair chance, freelance, and internship positions. Additionally, workforce and education partners can post events and resources to engage employers, job seekers, and anyone looking for new professional experiences and training, and highlights second chance employers. Since launching Kentucky Talent Hub in October 2021, we have almost 1,000 users and close to 1,500 job opportunities posted.

We know that creating workforce opportunities start at an early age. Knowing this, the Chamber launched a statewide initiative focused on connecting students across the state to learn more about career pathways and businesses in their communities. In partnership with the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) and the Kentucky Society for Human Resource Management (KYSHRM), nearly 35,000 students have engaged in this program within the 2021–2022 school year. Since the program’s launch in 2019, Bus to Business® has engaged over 210 schools and over 110 businesses across Kentucky, impacting over 42,000 students. Students have the opportunity to tour companies, complete hands-on work-based learning activities, and speak directly with employers about career pathways available in their organizations.

The last program I want to highlight is the first workforce program the Chamber started to help create workforce pipelines for key industries. Over 4 years ago, in partnership with the Kentucky Cabinet for Education and Workforce Development, Kentucky was selected as one of three states in the Nation to pilot a statewide implementation of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation’s program, Talent Pipeline Management (TPM)®. TPM® is an effort to mobilize the business community to close the skills gap by applying lessons learned from supply chain management to move employers into the role of “end customers,” projecting talent needs and aligning those with education and workforce development systems. Over the past 4 years, the Foundation’s Talent Pipeline Management program has built talent solutions for five of Kentucky’s key industry sectors, engaged almost 300 employers, and connected more than 3,000 Kentuckians to jobs, training, or work-based learning opportunities.

One thing about this program that I want to point out is that it is funded through Federal workforce dollars, and the partnership between state government and the Chamber was originally approved by a Republican Governor. Before our grant came up for renewal we had a Democratic Governor, but the success of the program was so clear, the funding has continued and the partnership has strengthened and grown.

In fact, this program has proven so successful, we have expanded our portfolio to include Kentucky’s signature industries, Equine and Distilling. You can’t have Kentucky without horses and bourbon, right? These signature industries are systematically leveraging TPM to solve their workforce challenges by getting direct input from employers on what critical positions they need to fill and what training or education is required.

The equine collaborative has engaged forty-six employers and built programs and solutions for various industry sub-sectors. As an example of the innovative solutions employers are building, they have worked with Blackburn Correctional Facility to create and implement the Workforce Readiness and Reentry Program, where inmates gain vocational and job skill training before connecting with career opportunities. The TPM® work in the Equine industry has also led to a registered apprenticeship program, the development of career pathway documents for various sectors, and a vocational program for individuals in recovery.

Following in the equine industry’s footsteps, the Kentucky Distillers’ Association (KDA) connected with the TPM® team to start a pilot project in 2021. This statewide effort has engaged 15 distilling companies and shows a projected need of 536 open jobs through 2025. Kentucky’s Distilling Industry shows a projected growth of 74 percent, which does not include normal attrition. Maintenance specialists, tour guides/brand Ambassadors, and machine operators are the industry’s greatest need. This collaborative is poised to co-engineer solutions with education and workforce

partners around the state. Through the success of this work, the KDA and the Kentucky Chamber Foundation have partnered to create a new position in the Kentucky TPM® system, dedicated to the distilling industry and modeled off the successful TPM® efforts with the equine industry.

Members of the Committee, as you can see, workforce is a multi-faceted problem that must have a multi-faceted solution to remove barriers and create opportunities.

Thank you for the opportunity to share a little about how collaborative partnerships in Kentucky are benefiting all of our citizens, workforce and economy.

[SUMMARY STATEMENT OF ASHLI WATTS]

Chair Murray, Ranking Member Burr, and Members of the Committee. I am honored to be here with you today to discuss an issue that every state is facing and that is workforce. Almost 2 years after the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, thanks to help from Congress including PPP loans, Federal relief packages, and a historic bipartisan infrastructure bill, our economy is well on its way to recovery. However, we will not be able to ensure a full recovery until we remove barriers to have an active, engaged workforce.

I'm pleased to be able to briefly highlight a few of the unique programs the Kentucky Chamber has spearheaded in collaboration with many partners to address workforce challenges and specifically to remove barriers to workforce participation. And in the days of a somewhat divisive political climate, I am pleased to say this issue really sees no side of the aisle and we have worked with leaders from both parties toward solutions.

For the last several years, the Kentucky Chamber has been creating programs to provide employer-led initiatives to develop, expand, and strengthen our workforce to support Kentucky's economy. I would briefly like to tell you about a few of these programs that are relevant to this Committee and topic.

- **The Workforce Recovery Program** focuses on engaging the business community as part of the solution to this epidemic by reducing stigma and increasing second-chance employment opportunities across Kentucky. This program has built an employer network of over 1,200 employers and recruited almost 28,000 fair chance job opportunities statewide!
- **The Kentucky Transformation Employment Program (KTEP)** was launched in September 2021. KTEP provides a pathway for businesses and employers to help more Kentuckians reach long-term recovery while supporting second chance employment. Employers who choose to enroll in the program receive protections from civil action regarding negligent hiring and hiring related to an employee's substance use disorder through state statute. To date, 22 Kentucky businesses have signed up for KTEP, which impacts more than 5,000 Kentucky employees.
- **Proper Identification** is another barrier faced by those coming out of incarceration. We realized many Kentuckians coming out of incarceration reenter society and the only form of identification they have is their mug shot. The Chamber, in partnership with the Just Trust, has started a pilot project in Kentucky to give those coming out of incarceration a state issued ID to help with their successful reentry.
- **Bus 2 Business** has engaged over 210 schools and over 110 businesses across Kentucky, impacting over 42,000 students. Students have the opportunity to tour companies, complete hands-on work-based learning activities, and speak directly with employers about career pathways available in their organizations.
- **Talent Pipeline Management** builds talent solutions for Kentucky's key industry sectors, and has engaged almost 300 employers, and connected more than 3,000 Kentuckians to jobs, training, or work-based learning opportunities. In fact, this program has proven so successful, we have expanded our portfolio to include Kentucky's signature industries, Equine and Distilling.

The CHAIR. Thank you very much. Mr. Beard.

**STATEMENT OF PETER BEARD, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR
REGIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, GREATER HOUSTON
PARTNERSHIP, HOUSTON, TX**

Mr. BEARD. Thank you, Chair Murray, Ranking Member Burr, and Members of the Committee for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing. This is an important and critical topic to the long term growth and competitiveness of the United States, and to the economic prosperity and mobility of its citizens. Good morning.

My name is Peter Beard. I serve as the Senior Vice President of Workforce Development at the Greater Houston Partnership, where I lead its Upskill Houston initiatives and Houston Back on Track, which are all employer-led based on the same model Kentucky uses, which is the Chamber Foundation's Talent Pipeline Management.

With 900 members and a board of directors of business and civic leaders, the Greater Houston Partnership serves as the Houston region's Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Organization, focused on a mission of ensuring Houston's place as a great global city. Similar to the supply chain disruptions reported in the news every day, Houston and many communities across the United States are confronting significant disruptions and fundamental shifts of their talent pipelines that provide the skilled talent our employers and businesses require to grow and compete globally.

Regional economies like Houston are experiencing a fundamental shift as they become technology enabled, innovation based economies. These shifts are accelerating three key trends impacting the skills individuals will need to compete for 21st century jobs. First, skills are becoming obsolete more quickly.

Second, employers now require higher levels of digital and technology skills across industries and functions. Third, there is a premium on soft and non-cognitive skills essential for baseline success in the workplace. These trends will require ongoing upskilling and reskilling of the existing workforce by more adaptable and agile approaches that will not likely be met by traditional education and workforce systems. In my written testimony, I provided some details related to several themes.

First, it is important to develop an understanding of the existing skills and capabilities of individuals in order to support their upskilling into quality jobs and occupational pathways. I described in detail how Houston is using a data driven model with the Texas Workforce Solutions Vocational Rehabilitation Services to assess the inherent and innate capabilities existing workers possess, and then to identify correlations and the presence of similar capabilities in opportunity populations.

In the pilot study, about 10 percent of the VRS clients tested were found to be good statistical fits for customer service roles, breaking down barriers. Second, employers will need to strengthen and support skills-based hiring and education and provide workers with clear occupational and skills pathways to navigate the changing skills requirements our industries are confronting.

In Houston, our industrial construction industry developed competency maps for critical industrial crafts that describe skill sets for each level from helper to journeyman, and then they map the skills to the relevant modules in the national career construction

curriculum and develop performance verifications to ensure individuals can professionally perform the relevant tasks and activities.

Community colleges, community based organizations, and workforce career offices will need to coordinate and align and integrate their services to support individuals and increase their workforce outcomes. The Workforce Connector Program in the Texas Gulf Coast is a partnership between United Way of Greater Houston and Gulf Coast Workforce Solutions, and provides co-location of wraparound services, career coaching and navigation, and cross referrals between the two systems.

The shift in the skills needs of employers is accelerating, and we will require lifelong learning and skills development to enhance occupational mobility and economic prosperity. It will be important to optimize the supports and services individuals and adult learners require to improve their economic mobility and prosperity through better jobs. Improved coordination, alignment, innovation, and performance across the multiple regional systems will be necessary.

At its core, this will require strong employer leadership and engagement, and the presence of robust, accurate, and timely labor market data and information. Agile and innovative solutions will be necessary to strengthen the virtuous cycle of economic growth and prosperity. Thank you for the opportunity today to provide this testimony. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Beard follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF PETER BEARD

Thank you, Chair Murray, Ranking Member Burr, and Members of the Committee for the invitation and opportunity to testify on this important topic that is critical to the long-term economic growth and competitiveness of the United States and to the economic mobility and prosperity of many of its citizens.

Good morning. My name is Peter Beard and I serve as the Senior Vice President for Workforce Development at the Greater Houston Partnership where I lead its *UpSkill Houston* and *Houston Back on Track* initiatives. With 900 members and a board of business and civic leaders, the *Greater Houston Partnership* serves as the Houston region's chamber of commerce and economic development organization focused on a mission of ensuring Houston's place as a great global city. The Partnership has long championed Houston's growth through economic development efforts aimed at attracting leading global companies to Houston, creating jobs and contributing to the region's GDP.

The Greater Houston Partnership created the UpSkill Houston as an employer-led, jobs-first initiative to address the skills gap challenge Houston (and every regional economy in the United States) faces with a changing industry base, an increasingly diverse population, and a fundamental shift in our regional economy (e.g., the energy transition). The skills gap exists when too many employers can't find diverse workers with the skills needed for success in the workplace, when and where the employers need them; and when too many people lack the skills, education, and credentials they need to compete for good 21st century jobs and to share in the economic prosperity of the region. UpSkill Houston focuses on the good occupations in the region that require education and skills beyond high school and less than a four-year college degree—"middle-skill" occupations.

In this morning's testimony, I will be focusing on four themes:

- (1) Developing baselines of existing skills and capabilities to support upskilling into quality jobs or occupational pathways.
- (2) Strengthening skills-based hiring and education.
- (3) Ensuring effective transitions into employers' workforces.
- (4) Supporting quality life-long learning that enhances occupational mobility and economic prosperity.

As context for my testimony, it is clear that the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the fundamental shift that has been taking place in regional economies to technology-enabled, innovation-based economies. In light of the pace of change and associated economic uncertainty, the following trends described below will likely continue to create additional challenges and skills gaps that we will need to address through strong alignment, innovation and agility:

- Skills are becoming **obsolete more quickly**; and will require routine on-the-job upskilling and reskilling of the existing workforce.
- Digitization and automation technologies are affecting all jobs—creating new ones, augmenting certain roles, and automating others—and will require workers to have higher levels of **digital and technology skills** across industries and functions.
- Employers are placing higher premiums on the **soft/non-cognitive skills** that are essential for baseline success in the workplace.

The foundation for addressing these challenges is the presence of robust, accurate, and timely labor market data and information. Strong engagement and leadership from employers and business leaders have been essential for ensuring Houston’s employers have access to the skilled talent they need to compete and grow. In our work, we utilize the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation’s Talent Pipeline Management® (TPM) framework and tools to ensure that **employers truly lead the work**. The framework provides consistency in the approach and creates the foundation to scale across a large region and provides essential data and information to drive action and performance.

The Greater Houston Partnership and UpSkill Houston fundamentally believe that quality education and skills development creates a virtuous cycle of economic growth and opportunity for the Houston region and requires strong employer leadership and engagement. To strengthen this virtuous cycle will require coordination, alignment, innovation and performance across multiple regional systems (i.e., education, higher education, workforce and community-based social services sector).

Developing Baselines of Existing Skills and Capabilities

Effective career coaching, counseling and advising are emerging as essential supports needed to assist workers with navigating the changing career pathways in today’s technology-enabled, innovation-based economy. Employers increasingly are segmenting critical skills into three broad categories: (1) Essential/Soft Skills, (2) Digital Skills, and (3) Technical/Job-Related Skills. Counselors and employers need to know what abilities, skills and personality dispositions are present in job candidates to guide them to occupations leveraging these innate abilities. In some cases, these can be inferred by previous positions which can be used to identify adjacent occupations with greater career mobility and opportunity.¹ “Next mile” skills training can then be identified to assist an individual in transitioning into that new pathway.

In Houston, we are using a tool developed by *Fast Forward Works* (“FFW”) to aggregate data related to inherent and innate capabilities existing workers possess and then to identify correlations and the presence of similar capabilities in opportunity populations that would suggest individuals might be successful in occupational roles.² When career counselors and navigators understand the presence of these capabilities, they can assist individuals in exploring potential career choices that can increase sustainability and success.

Fast Forward Works (“FFW”) has conducted occupational studies with employers in the trucking industry looking for “safe” truck drivers and in the customer service sector seeking to identify “good” customer service representatives. By developing customized assessments of key aptitudes, FFW has been able to develop a quantitative model found to be predictive of “safe” truck drivers and “good” customer service representatives.

In Houston, we combined the occupational studies with assessments conducted with 100 clients who have various disabilities including autism and anxiety dis-

¹ Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia has developed its *Occupational Mobility Explorer* to identify opportunities for workers to transfer their skills from one occupation to a similar—but higher-paying—occupation in the same labor market.

² The Fast Forward Works assessment platform contains psychometric instruments validated over decades of use in the academic literature to assess and measure cognitive abilities (e.g., critical thinking, pattern recognition, time sharing, etc.) and personality characteristics (e.g., conflict resolution, self-efficacy, self-actualization, risk avoidance, etc.).

orders, as well as learning and physical disabilities. FFW is working with Texas Workforce Solutions-Vocational Rehabilitation Services (“VRS”) to test the feasibility of assessing VRS clients in the comfort of their own homes using a 1-hour FFW cloud-based assessment measuring their cognitive abilities and aptitudes to identify meaningful employment opportunities. Traditionally, it has been necessary for them to go to a psychologist’s office to take various assessments which is costly to the state and is burdensome to the clients.

Using data from the occupational study for customer service representatives, FFW found that about 10 percent of the VRS clients tested would be good statistical fits for customer service roles. Quantitatively understanding and verifying the cognitive and personality characteristics of job candidates can potentially bring massive efficiencies to employers’ hiring and talent acquisition efforts, resulting in improved success rates for these clients. This approach also de-risks the hiring of these job candidates to the benefit of both employers and candidates.

As we increase the inventory of occupational studies analyzing high demand jobs, Houston will have the foundation to scale this work in an efficient and objective way and connect unconventional job candidates to employers in need of quality candidates.

Strengthening Skills-Based Hiring and Education

Employers are moving to skills-based hiring with proficiency assessments (and away from the pedigree of a college degree). Several examples include: Memorial Hermann Health (removing high school diploma requirements for entry-level positions) and Houston’s industrial construction contractors (using industry developed competency maps and skills verification).

While data and information from state and Federal agencies (e.g., education agency, higher education commission, and workforce board) are important starting points, aggregated, collective and real-time information and data **from employers** are what educational institutions, community-based organizations, and workforce development agencies require to strengthen education programs. Employers have direct access to and knowledge about this critical information and, when aggregated for an industry, can benefit education, community and workforce institutions:

- How many and what types of workers they need and when and where employers need them.
- What skills and competencies workers need to possess to be successful in the workplace.
- From where their best talent comes (e.g., internally, educational institutions, military, staffing agencies, community-based organizations, etc.).

With three critical pieces of information, employers can partner in new and more effective ways with education, workforce programs, and community-based organizations. With this valuable information, these organizations can develop and improve their programs to ensure students and adult learners develop the skills and competencies employers need in their workers to be successful. This strengthens the role of the talent providers and developers as they add critical value to learners and workers along a value chain that can start with career awareness and progress to employer upskilling and retention efforts. The State of Texas, along with six other states, will be a part of pilot project with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation to improve the quality and detail of state labor market information collected through enhanced Unemployment Insurance reporting. This Jobs and Employment Data Exchange (JEDx) project will streamline and improve how employers report data to government agencies; produces better longitudinal data about jobs and employment to power new workforce analytics while protecting privacy; and empower individuals with data and trusted records to verify work history as well as their eligibility for government benefits.

Houston’s industrial construction contractors have significantly advanced their efforts in skills-based hiring and education by developing competency maps that describe the skills and abilities craft professionals need to develop in order to move to the next level their careers, from entry-level helper to top-level journeyman. The industry collaborated to describe the skill sets for each level, mapped the skills to the relevant modules in the national construction curriculum (NCCER or National Center for Construction Education and Research), and developed performance verifications to ensure individuals have skills proficiency and can perform the relevant tasks and activities. The competency maps also provide the career pathways for individuals to advance in their careers and provide mobility of workers across employers.

Ensuring Effective Transitions Into Employers' Workforces

Against a backdrop of limited resources, we confront the reality of a significant challenge to support underserved populations as they prepare for and obtain the skills for good occupations. Many times, this requires that individuals have access to and receive the necessary wraparound supports and services (i.e., transportation, childcare, employment preparation, etc.) in order to ensure success. The effective transition into an employer's workforce is a critical to long-term success for many individuals.

Community-based, social service organizations not only provide the wraparound services, but build longer term relationships with their clients and provide ongoing supports for employment success once client enter the workforce. UpSkill Houston works closely with United Way of Greater Houston to support its community partners in partnering with employers to address barriers or breakdowns when they arise. During Summer 2021, UpSkill Houston conducted user research to understand the barriers and challenges of individuals and underserved populations impacted the pandemic. Four personas were developed and have assisted community-based organizations and employers adapt their programs and hiring requirements to be responsive to those barriers. This work ensures there is risk sharing that can avoid a bad outcome and support success.

United Way has also collaborated with the Gulf Coast workforce board to establish the Workforce Connector program that creates the opportunity for cross-referrals between workforce career offices and community-based, social service organizations to ensure a more comprehensive suites of services and supports are available to a client. The program also highlights how more effective coordination, alignment and integration between community colleges (i.e., career and student services), community-based organizations (i.e., wraparound services and supports, ongoing relationships), and workforce career offices can optimize the supports individuals are receiving.

Supporting Quality Life-Long Learning to Enhance Occupational Mobility and Economic Prosperity

As I noted previously, skills are becoming **obsolete more quickly**; and will require routine on-the-job upskilling and reskilling of the existing workforce. The associated pace of change and economic uncertainty, however, will likely make it more challenging to solve talent shortages through the traditional education and workforce systems and will require more adaptable and agile approaches and these trends are having implications today. More importantly, workers will now be expected to be lifelong learners.

Many of Houston's commercial and industrial construction firms (Turner Industries, S&B Engineers and Constructors, Marek Bros., TD Industries and Trio Electric) have created internal skills development programs which are closely aligned and coordinated with their business needs and to strengthen retention. Upskilling appears to be more effective when provided in the context of an individual's current employment because the additional skills are generally context specific.

It is important to note that we continue to see an increasing number of employers strengthening their upskilling and reskilling efforts for front-line workers through expanded use of tuition and educational benefits. Several examples of this trend include Waste Management's (headquartered in Houston) *Your Tomorrow* program, AT&T's *Future Ready* program, Walmart's *Live Better U and Walmart Academy*. Guild Education has emerged as an important partner for companies seeking to use their tuition and education benefit programs to more strategically upskill and reskill their existing workforces. We believe these trends will only accelerate and clearly impact adult learners, students and educational institutions.

Conclusion

Technology-enabled, innovation-based economies are accelerating the shift in the skills needs of employers at an accelerating pace. The Houston region requires strong employer leadership and engagement to drive the innovation necessary to strengthen the virtuous cycle of economic growth and prosperity. With improved coordination, alignment, innovation and performance across multiple regional systems that develop our region's and the Nation's talent, we are optimizing the supports and services individuals and adult learners require to improve their economic mobility and prosperity through better jobs.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

[SUMMARY STATEMENT OF PETER BEARD]

As the fundamental shift from regional economies to technology-enabled, innovation-based economies continues, the following trends will likely create additional challenges and skills gaps we will need to be address through strong alignment, innovation and agility.

- Skills are becoming **obsolete more quickly**; and will require routine on-the-job upskilling and reskilling of the existing workforce.
- Digitization and automation technologies are affecting all jobs—creating new ones, augmenting certain roles, and automating others—and will require workers to have higher levels of **digital and technology skills** across industries and functions.
- Employers are placing higher premiums on the **soft/non-cognitive skills** that are essential for baseline success in the workplace.

The Greater Houston Partnership and UpSkill Houston believe fundamentally that quality education and skills development creates a virtuous cycle of economic growth and opportunity for the Houston region which requires strong employer leadership and engagement. The foundation for addressing these challenges is the presence of robust, accurate, and timely labor market data and information.

Four themes strengthen this virtuous cycle through coordination, alignment, innovation, and performance across multiple regional systems.

- (1) **Developing baselines of existing skills and capabilities to support upskilling into quality jobs or occupational pathways:** Quantitatively understanding and verifying the cognitive and personality characteristics of job candidates can potentially bring massive efficiencies to employers' hiring and talent acquisition efforts, resulting in highly improved success rates.
- (2) **Strengthening skills-based hiring and education:** Houston's industrial construction industry developed competency maps for critical industrial crafts that describe skill sets for each level, mapped the skills to the relevant modules in the national construction curriculum, and developed performance verifications to ensure individuals have skills proficiency and can perform the relevant tasks and activities.
- (3) **Ensuring effective transitions into employers' workforces:** Effective coordination, alignment and integration between community colleges, community-based organizations, and workforce career offices can optimize the supports individuals are receiving and increase workforce outcomes.
- (4) **Supporting quality life-long learning that enhances occupational mobility and economic prosperity:** The pace of change and economic uncertainty makes it challenging to solve talent shortages through the traditional education and workforce systems, and requires adaptable and agile approaches.

The CHAIR. Thank you very much.

Ms. Sherard-Freeman. You want to turn on your mic.

STATEMENT OF NICOLE SHERARD-FREEMAN, GROUP EXECUTIVE, JOBS, ECONOMY & DETROIT AT WORK, CITY OF DETROIT, DETROIT, MI

Ms. SHERARD-FREEMAN. Thank you. Greetings Chair Murray, Ranking Member Burr, and all other Members of this Committee. It is my honor to be with you today. I lead economic development and workforce development on the ground in Detroit. And to answer the questions you have asked, I am going to begin with a short story.

In 2018, Mayor Mike Duggan pitched the late Sergio Marchionne, who was then CEO of Fiat Chrysler Automotive, now Stellantis, on a once in a lifetime idea. FCA needed 215 acres of land for a new assembly plant for the new Jeep Grand Cherokee, a \$2.5 billion investment that would be the first of its kind in 40

years. To win the business, Detroit had 60 days to assemble the land and get the Community and City Council to approve the deal.

In return, the Mayor had only one major ask, that FCA would give Detroiters the first chance at the 5,000 jobs the project would bring to the city after, of course, the union satisfied all of its union obligations. In Stellantis' report to the community in December 2021, the company reported hiring more than 5,200 Detroiters from a pool of more than 16,000 Detroit at Work, job ready candidates.

Union membership increased by more than 5,000. Gross wages paid to employees in Detroit increased by 44 percent. And income taxes collected in the city of Detroit increased by 34 percent. The project had its challenges, but the experience offered exceptional learnings. First, economic conditions in Detroit, good or bad, highlight two challenges we all know, childcare and transportation.

In Detroit, there are only 23,000 available childcare seats for 55,000 children under the age of five, and the average cost of childcare for just one child in Detroit exceeds the median annual cost of rent. Southeast Michigan also has a unique set of transportation challenges. The average metro Detroiter can access 2 million jobs in a 1-hour drive, but only 65,000 jobs in a 1-hour public transit trip. Across the state, the locations of people who are living in poverty are mismatched to the locations of good jobs.

There are also other barriers to economic mobility. First, the irrefutable impact of intergenerational poverty. In addressing America's reskilling challenge, a July 2018 report from the Council of Economic Advisers, the authors cite situational poverty factors, which are potentially strong deterrents to pursuing retraining. We believe that report and can add to it from our experience that when you live in situational poverty for too long, intergenerational poverty becomes inescapable.

Second, job readiness expectations are rapidly changing, and too many workers lack access to the knowledge economy. These conditions have sidelined thousands of workers in Detroit, and low labor force participation rates are sub-optimizing our Nation's economy. So what can we do about it? Here are four solutions from the ground in Detroit. First, the Community Health Corps, a model built to disaggregate and solve for the most immediate and egregious issues facing Detroit's least resourced residents.

This program is essential to increasing labor force participation, because through it, we help people get back on their feet so they can get back into the economy. We have served more than 1,300 households in the past 13 months, and 490 participants are already well on their way to their own economic self-sufficiency goals. The second initiative is a new model for work readiness driven by employers need.

Now in the Stellantis example, Detroit had one goal, and that was to understand what was keeping our employer client awake at night and solve for it. Detroit at Work turned those employer insights into a workshop that we delivered with our community based partners more than 975 times across the city, in churches and recreation centers, and in our one stops known as Detroit at work career centers.

The company said that the Detroit at Work models saved their H.R. department more than \$2.1 million in costs. The third learn-

ing is about adult basic education. More than 200 Detroiters washed out of Stellantis' hiring process because they didn't have a high school diploma, and Mayor Mike Duggan's response was to create Learn to Earn, where Detroiters earn a stipend to complete their high school diploma.

Now, critics argue that paying adults to finish a basic credential shouldn't be necessary. Frontline practitioners would argue that incentivizing adults who have real financial obligations and significant time constraints is a model worth trying. Getting residents off the sidelines and back into the workforce is essential to Michigan's economy.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Sherard Freeman follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF NICOLE SHERARD-FREEMAN

Greetings Chair Murray, Ranking Member Burr, and all other Members of this Committee. It is my honor to be with you today. I'm Nicole Sherard-Freeman, Group Executive for Jobs, Economy and Detroit at Work in the city of Detroit. I lead economic development, workforce development, and serve as the executive director of Detroit's Workforce Investment Board under the leadership of Mayor Mike Duggan.

You invited me here today to talk about the barriers job-seekers and would-be job-seekers are facing on the ground, to tell you how we're solving those issues in Detroit, and to ask for your help where we need it. To do that, I have to begin by telling you a short story that illustrates what's possible at the intersection of workforce development and economic development with the right partnerships.

In 2018, Mayor Mike Duggan pitched the late Sergio Marchionne, then-president and CEO of Fiat Chrysler Automotive—now known as Stellantis—on a once-in-a-lifetime idea. FCA was in search of 215 acres of land to build a new assembly plant for the new Jeep Grand Cherokee—a \$2.5 billion dollar investment that would be the first of its kind in 40 years. To seal the deal, Detroit had 60 days to assemble the land, gain community and City Council approvals, complete the sale, and ensure the City's capacity to handle the related approval processes. In exchange, the Mayor had only one major ask: that FCA would give Detroiters the first chance at the 5,000 union jobs the new campus would bring to Detroit, after satisfying all of the company's union obligations.

In Stellantis' (formerly FCA's) report to the community in December 2021, the company reported that since July 2019, they have hired more than 5500 Detroiters from a pool of more than 16,000 Detroit at Work, job-ready candidates (including into company jobs across the Metro Detroit area). Union membership increased by more than 5,000. Gross wages paid to employees increased from \$573M in 2020 to \$827M in 2021—an increase of 44 percent. Income taxes collected in the city of Detroit increased from \$10.6M in 2020 to \$14.2M in 2021—an increase of 34 percent.¹ While neither the company nor the City and its residents would say this project has been without its challenges, the experience informs a good deal of what I'll share today.

Any significant change in economic conditions—the infusion of a \$2.5B investment, or the fallout from a global pandemic, for example—offers important lessons to any student of the circumstance. Changing economic conditions in Detroit—for the better and for the worse—have brought into sharp contrast two challenges we already knew Detroiters and many Michiganders were facing: childcare and transportation.

In Detroit, there are only 23,000 available childcare seats for 55,000 children under 5 years old.² Beyond the availability of seats, childcare is often prohibitively expensive, as the average cost of sending one child to childcare in Michigan exceeds the median annual cost of rent.³

While Detroit is home to the Nation's Big 3 automakers, Southeast Michigan has a unique set of transportation challenges. First, many Detroiters commute out of the

¹ Stellantis. Neighborhood Advisory Council Update. December 15, 2021. <https://stellantis4detroit.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/2021-NAC-Update-Stellantis-Presentation-FINAL.pdf>.

² <https://hopestartsheredetroit.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/HSB-Full-Framework-2017-web.pdf>.

³ Ibid.

city for work and must depend on a personal vehicle to do so. Public transit is often not a viable option, as the average metro-Detroiter can access 2 million jobs in a 1-hour drive but only 65,000 jobs in a one-hour public transit trip.⁴ While commuting by car is often a necessity, it's also expensive. Transportation costs the average Detroit household more than 20 percent of their annual income.⁵ This high cost results in many Detroiters going without personal transportation.

Economic conditions in Detroit have also laid bare three other barriers impacting far more than just our current employment levels. First, The Council of Economic Advisers report *Addressing America's Reskilling Challenge* (July 2018) cites "managing both education and covering household expenses" as a potentially "strong deterrent" to pursuing retraining.⁶ Our frontline experience builds on that observation. Situational poverty, or poverty created by short-term conditions, is often created by illness, death of a primary breadwinner, or long-term layoff. By contrast, intergenerational poverty is the resulting outcome of extended situational poverty that is passed on to the next generation. Its chief characteristics include hopelessness, persistent failure to succeed through conventional or traditional means, and little to no awareness of or access to resources to the people or systems necessary to change one's circumstances.⁷ Live in situational poverty for too long, and intergenerational poverty becomes inescapable. Moreover, changing expectations for job and career readiness in many of our largest and fastest growing sectors, and the lack of access too many workers have to the knowledge economy and the future of work are a strategic threat to the competitiveness of our city, state and region. These dynamics have sidelined thousands of workers in Detroit—resulting in low labor force participation rates that suboptimize our economy.⁸ While scoping our challenges is, of course, an important first step, we take that question one step further in Detroit. We regularly ask ourselves, what if we combined our knowledge of the barriers our residents face with expert insights into the future of work? And then, what if we iterated on a set of solutions that were informed by resident, grassroots, faith-based, and community-based organizations so that we could improve our trendlines on the metrics that deliver value? What I'll highlight today are four solutions, how they fit together to solve for the larger challenges we face, and how we measure those strategies against the results the Mayor, the Mayor's Workforce Development Board (Detroit's Workforce Investment Board), our State of Michigan Labor and Economic Opportunity partners and elected officials demand, and our taxpayers deserve.

Best practices for addressing workers' barriers to employment Congress can support to scale success we've had in Detroit.

Community Health Corps: Addressing wrap around needs of Detroit's most disconnected residents and connecting them with work.

Community Health Corps, created by Mayor Duggan and Deputy Mayor and former Michigan Supreme Court Justice Conrad Mallett, is a model is built to disaggregate and solve for some of the most immediate and egregious issues facing Detroit's most disconnected residents. From unsafe housing conditions and food insecurity to access to behavioral and physical health services, Detroit's Community Health Corps is a 30-person team working to connect Detroit's vast network of existing programs and community service providers in an operational infrastructure that will help us make one taxpayer dollar work like five dollars. This program is essential to increasing labor force participation because many of the challenges our most disconnected residents face don't exist because we lack solutions. These challenges exist because access to solutions across multiple agencies with complex, disconnected, laborious bureaucracies is a barrier. If you've ever tried to help a family member work through an application for a legitimately earned public benefit following a house fire with a fatality, as I have, you know the challenges firsthand. With CARES and ARPA funding as support, Community Health Corp is delivering a team of front-line, door-knocking State of Michigan certified community health workers who are getting into and staying in the trenches with Detroit's most disconnected residents. We've served 1316 households in the past 13 months, with 490

⁴ University of Minnesota Accessibility Observatory. <https://access.umn.edu/>.

⁵ Center for Neighborhood Technology. H+T Index. <https://htaindex.cnt.org/>.

⁶ <https://www.luminafoundation.org/resource/addressing-americas-reskilling-challenge/rapidly>.

⁷ <https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdhhs/MCCA-2014-2015-Generational-Poverty-Report-515073-7.pdf>.

⁸ <https://www.crainsdetroit.com/sponsored-content/why-increasing-labor-force-participation-essential-michigans-economy>.

having completed their economic self-sufficiency goals.⁹ We're not the first community to try this approach, but here's what's different in Detroit: Within the appropriate legislative guidelines, Mayor Duggan seated this program inside our workforce agency, Detroit at Work. Why? Because intergenerational poverty is complex. If our model delivers essential human services without hardwiring participants with concrete ways to improve their skills, get a job, and get firm footing onto the path toward the middle class, then we're not improving economic mobility; we're just creating false hope that economic stability and mobility are possible. As long as they're doing their part, our resident taxpayers should rightfully expect better than that from their government officials.

Innovative work-readiness programs and industry partnerships with local employers.

The second initiative born of the FCA experience is a new model for work-readiness and employer partnerships. From the early days of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and Labor and Economic Opportunity division's \$5.8M investment in the project, the Detroit team has had one aim: Understand what's keeping our employer-client awake at night and, wherever possible, solve for the issues before they ever show up on the manufacturing facility floor. Our client told us three things: (1) new workers don't have access to the information necessary to understand the working conditions and physical demands of a day-in-the-life of a production worker; (2) the communication and problem-solving methods in today's manufacturing environment are not the same as those that existed in your grandfather's plant; and, (3) if you set expectations for the work, and new employees get through the first few weeks, the job, career opportunities, and union wages and benefits can offer the kind of financial stability that helps rebuild families and communities. Our job at Detroit at Work was to distill those observations into a work and career readiness workshop that would quickly get Detroiters 'on the list' for priority hiring when the Mack Engine Plant opened. That's what we promised, and Detroit at Work and its community-based partners delivered more than 1000 work-readiness workshops across the City in churches, recreation centers, and our American Job Center One-Stops—also known as Detroit at Work Career Centers. More than 37,000 Detroiters expressed interest, more than 16,000 took the steps necessary to pre-qualify themselves through our Detroit at Work program, and more than 5500—or roughly one out of three applicants were hired. The company says the Detroit at Work marketing and vetting campaign helped them save \$2.1M in H.R. costs. In combination with the State of Michigan's Labor and Economic Opportunity investment of \$5.8M, this \$7.9M investment in talent created a new model for employer relationships in the City. In Detroit, we believe public workforce systems owe employers and job-seekers significant returns on their investments.

Reshaping adult basic education to enable credential attainment and support participants' basic needs.

While not a surprise, the third learning has led us to begin reshaping adult basic education in the City. More than 200 Detroiters washed-out of the Stellantis hiring process because they didn't have a high school diploma. We have no data on the number of Detroiters who never applied because they did not wish to be embarrassed by their lack of the credential. Mayor Duggan's response was to create Learn to Earn, a program to support Detroiters with a stipend of up to \$200 per week for up to 6-months to complete their high school diploma or GED. Critics argue that paying adults to finish a basic credential shouldn't be necessary. Front-line practitioners argue that incentivizing adults who have real financial obligations and significant time constraints is a model worth trying.¹⁰ To date, more than 480 Detroiters have enrolled and are making progress toward skills gains and diploma completion. In Detroit, this number is more than two times the number of students who enrolled prior to the establishment of the incentive model.¹¹ In Detroit, we believe that by adjusting the incentive model for students and exploring incentives for teachers, we have a shot at further modifying the behaviors of participants and outcomes of the program.

Leverage Federal investment and strong outcomes of work-based learning to broaden the impact of local and state funding.

Last, there are more than 11,000 Detroiters who were not selected as an FCA hire. This pool of talent (along with more than 30,000 more in our data base who are Detroit at Work customers who are not interested in auto manufacturing jobs)

⁹ Community Health Corps, city of Detroit. December 2021 Program Update.

¹⁰ Karolina Ramos. Poverty Solutions. Behavioral Economics of Education Incentives: Lessons for the Learn to Earn Program. November 2021.

¹¹ Learn to Earn Program Update. City of Detroit. July 2021.

are ready to take steps toward their next opportunity. Using American Rescue Plan Act funding, we've built a plan to take advantage of their motivation and skills called Skills for Life. Essentially, three internal City departments have piloted a program through which Detroiters work 3 days per week earning \$15 per hour removing commercial blight remediation and leading other city beautification projects while spending 2 days per week earning a credential and \$15 per hour that will lead to a middle-class job at the end of the program. We believe this combination of meaningful and necessary work to beautify the City while earning pay and a credential is a pathway to a middle class career. More importantly, it's a way for Detroiters to practice lifelong learning. Skills for Life is an opportunity for residents to build their professional adaptability skills—one of the most sought-after traits for employees in the knowledge economy,¹² and establish critical thinking, advanced problem-solving in advanced technology environments (including highly automated and artificial intelligence [AI] enabled workplaces), mobilizing systems and teamwork effectiveness, digital fluency and citizenship, and understanding digital systems. These competencies are among the 56 foundational skills that will help citizens thrive in the future of work.¹³ While the Skills for Life program launched in November 2021, early results are promising. More than 200 residents are interested, 100 have applied, 38 enrolled, 3 graduated, and 39 are expected to begin in the next 4 weeks. While this is no cause for a victory lap, we see positive trends we will continue to track, evaluate and use to inform future program adjustments.

We believe that taken together, the measures above will help increase Detroit's labor force participation. Mayor Mike Duggan and City Council's vision is to create opportunity for all Detroiters. As noted in a recent editorial by former Michigan Lt. Governor Brian Calley,¹⁴ and as echoed by my Workforce Board co-chairs Cindy Pasky, President and CEO of global staffing agency Strategic Staffing Solutions, and David Meador, Chief Administrative Officer of DTE Energy, one of Michigan's largest utilities, getting residents off the sidelines and back into the workforce is essential to Michigan's economy and Detroit's readiness for continued industry investments. While Detroit's labor force participation rate has been steadily rising over the last year, to just 1,353 fewer residents employed or looking for work in December 2021 than pre-pandemic March 2020, too many Detroiters remain disconnected from work.¹⁵ Improving economic self-sufficiency, and advancing economic mobility for residents into good, middle-class jobs and careers—while centering equity in the strategy—are among Mayor Mike Duggan's top priorities.

Conclusion

One silver lining in our current crisis has been the funding to put real muscle behind understanding and creating resident-informed solutions to what we're facing. With the help of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding and our partnership with the State of Michigan's Labor and Economic Opportunity division, CARES funding in mid-2019, and now American Rescue Plan Act funding, Detroit stood up these first-of-their-kind initiatives to tackle some of our most intractable challenges, while creating pathways to economic stability and mobility. We believe that, in Detroit, our residents don't need more programs. What we need is funding and permissions to braid funding across the Department of Labor (DOL), Health and Human Services (HHS), Department of Education (DOE) and others into solutions that deliver a greater return on investment for taxpayers. As importantly, we need investments to continue redefining industrial land and sites so that Detroit and Michigan can strengthen the local and regional economy, and can compete to bring more industry and investments to the US.

Many thanks to this committee for the privilege of sharing Detroit's learnings. If of interest to this body, Detroit would welcome the chance to provide further testimony about what is working, what is not, and what Mayor Duggan and his administration are doing about it in the City with support from Senator Debbie Stabenow and Senator Gary Peters, Governor Gretchen Whitmer and her administration, local legislators including City Council and the Detroit Delegation, the business community and faith based leaders, and most importantly—the residents of the city of Detroit.

¹² <https://www.accenture.com/us-en/insights/future-workforce/missing-middle-skills-human-ai-collaboration>.

¹³ <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/defining-the-skills-citizens-will-need-in-the-future-world-of-work>.

¹⁴ <https://www.crainsdetroit.com/sponsored-content/why-increasing-labor-force-participation-essential-michigans-economy>.

¹⁵ Bureau of Labor Statistics. Local Area Unemployment Statistics.

[SUMMARY STATEMENT OF NICOLE SHERARD-FREEMAN]

I. HELP Committee Greetings.

II. Stellantis (formerly FCA) and Detroit—A brief on-the-ground case study of how economic development and workforce development come together to produce unprecedented opportunities and outcomes in employment and economic outcomes for the city of Detroit.

III. What Detroit has learned from significant changes in its economic conditions. Two known barriers (childcare, transportation) and new insights into long-term issues: *the irrefutable impact of intergenerational poverty, changing expectations for job and career readiness in many of our largest and fastest growing sectors; and the lack of access too many workers have to the knowledge economy and the future of work.*

IV. Detroit's response: Best practices for addressing workers' barriers to employment that Congress can support to help scale the success we've had in Detroit.

- (a) Community Health Corp: Addressing wrap around needs of Detroit's most disconnected residents in a model that connects them to work
- (b) Detroit at Work: Innovative work readiness programs and industry partnerships with local employers
- (c) Reshaping adult basic education to enable credential attainment and support participant's basic needs.
- (d) Leveraging Federal investment and strong outcomes from work-based learning to broaden the impact of local and state funding, and ready residents for lifelong learning and the future of work.

V. Conclusion: Opportunities and Asks

The CHAIR. Thank you very much to all of our witnesses for excellent testimony. We will now begin around a 5-minute questions, and I ask all of our colleagues to again keep track of the clock, stay within those 5 minutes.

Ms. Mack and Ms. Sherard-Freeman, I will start with both of you. Too many young people face really significant challenges in accessing high quality jobs, especially in in-demand fields. Barriers like lack of access to childcare, transportation, high quality education often really undercut workers earning low wages, workers of color, or formerly incarcerated individuals, workers with disabilities and many others. We need a system that really helps workers overcome those barriers.

Ms. Mack and Ms. Sherard-Freeman, let me ask both of you, and I will start with Ms. Mack, what are the top things that workforce systems working with their partners need to do to support people facing multiple barriers to employment?

Ms. MACK. Sure, thank you for the question. I think what happens on the ground is a recognition that partnership is crucial and critical. And so what we see, many programs are working across their community based partners in conjunction with their Government partners to make sure that there are adequate wraparound supports for individuals who are going through programs.

By way of example, I was speaking with an adult literacy program yesterday in the Capital region, and they were sharing a story about a woman named Maria, who had a IEP, so an individual education plan because she had a learning disability and was at a third or fourth grade reading level when she entered into their literacy program, and ultimately needed employment.

They were able to connect her to a part time job at a department store while providing the additional wraparound supports transportation, childcare, housing support to be able to continue to finish

that high school diploma and ultimately get into a post-secondary career through vocational rehabilitation.

Again, I think part of what the secret sauce is for workforce development is on the ground. The workforce boards and their partners know each other really well, and when they work together, that is when we see success not only for employers, but for the individuals as well.

The CHAIR. Thank you. Ms. Sherard-Freeman.

Ms. SHERARD-FREEMAN. I will build on Ms. Mack's responds by adding that the other crucial component to partnerships is actually getting the voice of the participant into the center of the discussion.

Now, some would call that centering worker voice. What we see it as on the ground is getting the voice of the people who have those struggles into the conversation, into the room. I will tell you the story briefly of Rhonda Liz Carter, who was hired by FCA.

She had been trying to get into the company since she was 18. It took the Detroit at Work program to translate employer insights into really what Ms. Carter needed to know to be a successful candidate.

It had been decades, and the Detroit at Work program on the ground, building solutions around what participants tell us their barriers are, was really the answer to her challenges.

The CHAIR. Thank you. Every year, more than 600,000 people transition from state and Federal prison back into their communities. High quality jobs really is one of the most effective ways we know to reduce recidivism and ensure formerly incarcerated people have a path to stability and success.

But unfortunately, the unemployment rate for formerly incarcerated people is nearly five times higher than the overall unemployment rate. So we really need better policies and systems in place to support the transition back into the workforce for those individuals.

Ms. Mack, I will turn back to you. How are the workforce system and community based organizations in New York working to support people as they transition back into their communities and into pathways that lead to high quality paying jobs?

Ms. MACK. Sure, thank you. Again, going back to the example I provided in the testimony. Having a place for someone to land when they leave incarceration is crucial.

That is why Center for Employment Opportunities and the Osborne Association are such important assets in our state, because they work directly with the jail system and probation to make sure that individuals sort of land in a program that can, again, address their specific needs, whether it be housing, that child support, sort of other sort of debts that they have accrued, but also to be able to address some of the soft skills that are necessary so that they can transition through just transitional employment into a good paying job.

It allows employers to try them out. But that also allows individuals to get that immediate wage, which again, they have indicated as absolutely crucial to the ability of people to sort of stay out of jail.

The CHAIR. Thank you very much, and I will turn to Senator Burr. My time has expired.

Senator BURR. Thank you, Madam Chair. Ms. Watts, why is it important for the private sector to be involved in the second chance hiring policies, and why did the Kentucky Chamber embrace that initiative?

Ms. WATTS. Thank you for that question. The Kentucky Chamber Several years ago, we have been advocating for policies specifically around felony expungement. And many people said, why is the Kentucky Chamber, the group of the employers in Kentucky, really advocating for not knowing what someone's background was?

Really, it was because of opportunity and because of workforce and making sure that people really could, once they pay their debt to society, come out and be active citizens, be good taxpayers, be involved in the community. And that is what we wanted to see. And so I think it is important for employers to really lean in on this issue because it is not just saying I am a second chance employer.

There is a lot more that goes into it, and that is what our programs provide. It is looking at their H.R. manuals, it is training their employees. It is talking about maybe it is not the first chance, and you are out, maybe it is two or three chances and making sure they have the proper support system around them and recovery, but really leaning in and making sure that we are aware of the struggles these people are facing.

Even something as simple as giving them an ID when they are coming out of incarceration. We are wanting them to come back and reenter into society and put their best foot forward. But yet, when they have their mug shot to show for a job interview, that is not really putting their best foot forward. So we are literally thinking of every step that we can to help these people reintegrate back in society. And we often say, we don't want them to just get a job, we want them to get meaningful employment.

We want them to get training, something that they are passionate about, so they can really build that life on there. And that is what we have seen being successful in Kentucky.

Senator BURR. Well, thank you for that work. Mr. Beard, employers are embracing skills based hiring rather than focusing more on the traditional credentials. How have Houston employers adapted to this practice and what more can be done?

Mr. BEARD. Thank you, Senator Burr—excuse me. First, we are seeing folks remove the credential requirement. Memorial Hermann, one of our largest health care systems, has removed its high school diploma requirement. And similar to Ms. Watts's point, it will show up in the interviewing process, whether folks have the skills and abilities for the roles that they are describing.

We are also understanding and seen as we described in the construction industry, that the skills are more important than the credential. So sending a signal that you can leave high school and come into the workforce and within a couple of years be in a very, very good job.

Then I think the future trend is we are also seeing other employers, for example, Chevron, who is moving to a skills based hiring approach, and they are going to use Houston as their pilot site to bring that. And when you think about Chevron in terms of not only

the work that it does in kind of the middle skill space, but also in the high skilled space.

We expect that we will continue to see that role, because at the end of the day, the skill, not the credential, is what is there.

Senator BURR. Thank you for that. Ms. Sherard-Freeman, workforce systems have two major customers, job seekers and employers. I want you to sort of expand on what you have said about the importance your office puts on engaging both of these groups in the employment process.

Ms. SHERARD-FREEMAN. Thank you for the question, Ranking Member Burr. So we believe that unless we are driving solutions with the employer's needs in mind, our solutions will be insufficient. We also believe that unless we center our solutions around what workers really need, job seekers and would be job seekers, our solutions will be insufficient. And so we found ways on the ground in Detroit really to bring both of those perspectives into focus and keep them in focus.

Senator BURR. Great. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The CHAIR. Senator Casey.

Senator CASEY. Thank you, Chair Murray. I wanted to start by noting a piece of legislation that both Senator Cassidy and I are working on, the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, and I am grateful for Senator Cassidy's partnership on this bill and the commitment shown by Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr to advancing this important legislation. And its policies like this that obviously will help make high quality employment accessible to those who face very steep barriers.

I want to thank Bill Cassidy for that and thank the Chair and Ranking Member. I wanted to start with a question about what is known as the sub-minimum wage. People with disabilities are better able to achieve financial independence, we know, and to spend more time engaging in their communities when they transition to competitive employment and work in integrated environments, workplaces that hire both people with disabilities and people without disabilities.

I have introduced the transformation to Competitive Integrated Employment Act, which would end the sub—end the sub-minimum wage and provide support to businesses in order that they have the support they need to do just that. Senator Daines has worked with me on this bill, and I appreciate his help.

We know that the labor force participation rate for people with disabilities is almost 38 percent, according to the Department of Labor. That is half, half the rate for people with disabilities. In addition, the poverty rate for people with—for adults with disabilities between the ages of 16 and 64 is 26 percent. So a high, or I should say a low labor force participation rate and a very high poverty rate.

Mr. Beard and others who may want to weigh in, how do we make sure that people with disabilities can obtain employment that is my first question. And then second, what are your recommendations for increasing employment for those with disabilities?

Mr. BEARD. Thank you, Senator. The example I gave is really trying to knock down those barriers, which is understanding what

skills and capabilities an individual has, and then mapping it to a place where they can easily upskill into that role.

That is one example. And then we have another example in Houston with a nonprofit organization that has partnered with many of the vendors at our main sports venues, where they train individuals to serve pizza and other things and make them that initial wage that is much more competitive.

Those are the examples, but it is going to require employers understanding that the skills individuals have can be used in the workplace. And to your point, the diversity that enriches the workplace as well.

Senator CASEY. Thank you, and unless there is anyone else who may want to weigh in on that, I will have a second question for Ms. Mack. This is, with relationship to, or I should say with regard to questions about low level criminal records. We know that more than one in three adults have some form of criminal record, which keeps them from participating in many facets of everyday life as background checks become more commonplace.

Although many of these individuals successfully complete their sentence, many are still constrained by low level and non-violent criminal records. I have introduced legislation with Senator Joni Ernst from Iowa, the so-called Clean Slate Act, which would automatically seal low-level nonviolent Federal offenses after the individual completes their sentence.

Ms. Mack, here is the question, when you consider this issue, in your experience, how can criminal records impact an individual's ability to obtain education and training or access high quality employment even after, after they have completed their sentence?

Ms. MACK. Sure, thank you for that question. We know that in some instances, many people don't even know that they have a criminal record. And especially with young adults. We actually have an entire organization in the city of New York that just works on helping adults understand whether or not they have something of a record and how they can get that sealed or expunged, if necessary.

I think as was described before, one of the biggest barriers as we sort of now use automated processes to screen resumes and often these types of offenses will screen people right out before they are even getting a shot to sort of explain what happened or what the instances were that sort of got them in the situation in the first place.

But in addition to that, I think folks often forget that the skills and abilities of individuals are what we need to be paying attention to and not necessarily what has happened in their past. And so, I mean, personally, I believe that would be a huge help to many New Yorkers. And I know in our state, our state legislature is taking strides to think about ways to do that as well. So, thank you for that.

Senator CASEY. Thanks very much, Ms. Mack. Thank you, Chair Murray.

The CHAIR. Thank you.

Senator Cassidy.

Senator CASSIDY. Thank you very much. Thanks to all the witnesses. I think there is a common theme that I am hearing from

you, which is you kind of meet the worker where she or he is, and meeting them there, you work with the employer. Let me just go right back to Bob Casey. I think that is the purpose of our Pregnant Workers Fairness Act.

There is an article I have seen from a woman in an article from the Cincinnati Enquirer, so obviously applies to Kentucky, of someone in Kentucky, a police officer who is pregnant, and she couldn't get the lighter duty that was available in her late pregnancy, even though it was available because of rigid work laws. And so if we are going to like increase opportunity for people, there has to be a certain flexibility. It has to be meeting the worker where she is, or he is in a case of not related to pregnancy.

Bob, thanks very much for doing that, and hopefully our preaching on the issue will get it passed, so thank you. And then also related to that, which all of you seem to speak to, but nobody speaks to you directly. I want to make a pitch for something else I am working on with Senator Warren, the College Transparency Act, which would allow an individual when she or he is deciding where to go to school, to have easily accessible and understanding information as to how much she or he would have to borrow in order to complete a curriculum in that major at that school and what their earning potential would be afterwards.

I say that because commonly I see billboards of pretty and handsome young men and women going to some university, so as to, kind of online training or whatever. I know they are borrowing a heck of a lot of money, but I can look at the professions that they are promoting, and they are not going to make enough to pay back those loans. And if they draw down their Pell, they are going to— it is going to be a huge opportunity cost.

Instead of being able to apply all this money to a course of study that would really give them a career for the future, they are going to end up earning something at minimum wage plus tips, hoping that ends up meeting needs.

Again, that is our College Transparency Act. And just so I know that I am not kind of assuming that you would agree, Ms. Sherard-Freeman, let me just ask. I am from Baton Rouge. We have, unfortunately, a lot of poor folks. I am glad we have our folks, but I am sorry that they are poor, and you spoke to them so well.

I almost feel like this is a bait and switch. You spoke about helping people get through their high school. Here we have something to help them get through their college. But oftentimes the money ends up wasted because they choose a curriculum which is not going to be profitable for them. Any thoughts on that in general, and perhaps particularly on the goal of something like the College Transparency Act?

Ms. SHERARD-FREEMAN. Well, thank you so much for the question. Yes, we believe that the kind of transparency that you are describing is essential to really fixing the issue that we have all talked about today and that is getting people off the sidelines and back into the workforce.

That presumes getting them back into positions in the workforce that will provide for both economic stability and economic mobility. People can't make good decisions without good data. And I think

what you are talking about is improving the quality of data available to Americans.

Senator CASSIDY. Yes, ma'am. And Mr. Beard, I once went to a place in South Louisiana and the guy said, I need a master welder, I don't need a sociologist. But if I got a master welder, the guy is going to make \$80,000 a year before we get to overtime. And so again, this is all about competitiveness.

How do we make it competitive for that individual to get a better job, but also, how do we, in the aggregate, make our Country more competitive, providing jobs for those people? Any thoughts about the transparency required so someone would choose that would be better for their future, earning potential as opposed to that would seem to attract them on a billboard?

Mr. BEARD. We would wholeheartedly agree, Senator. First, we think about it as credentials of value, which means our credential has an intended purpose and you can finance it the way you were describing, that it isn't an undue burden once you leave. And so that requires the information that is there.

The State of Texas is partnering with the U.S. Chamber Foundation as part of its job employment data exchange to get the kind of data that would be necessary for that transparency to show someone who had completed a degree, what they are making using enhanced unemployment insurance reporting.

In addition, we think performance based approaches strengthen that approach, and you can see it done in multiple different ways. In terms of here in Texas, there is the Texas State Technical College that basically is funded because it is out-workforce outcomes are the basis for the appropriation from the Legislature.

Finally, the U.S. Chamber Foundation is also working on talent finance to begin to align employment outcomes, employer interest, and education to actually produce those outcomes.

Senator CASSIDY. Yes, that is a—thank you all. Again, I just feel like each of you is meeting the worker where she or he is. And I just learned in my experience, I am a doctor, you have got to meet the patient, you have got to meet the individual where they are, not where you expect them to be.

Thank you for that and thank you for—I am going to take it as a ringing endorsement for my College Transparency Act. Thank you all. I yield back.

The CHAIR. Thank you.

Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr. This is a great panel on an important topic, so I have a plea and two questions. So my plea is this, I am speaking to you as representative of the entire Nation's workforce development professionals. Many of you use the phrase soft skills. I hate that phrase because it sounds too soft.

When I talk to my employers, they really want technical skills, but in some ways, even more. They are looking for creativity, problem solving, teamwork, communication, show up and be mission focused and stay till the work is done. And they almost have a harder time finding that than the technical skills.

They can sometimes train for the technical skills, but it is hard to create that. So I always use success skills are survival skills

rather than soft skills, because I think it sort of elevates it to the importance and deserves. So that is my plea.

Now my question. Ms. Mack, in your testimony, I just want to read a quote from your testimony here. Your written testimony. You talk about the barriers that folks have, “workers lack access to foundational and technical skills and do not have resources to pay for training courses while also supporting their families.

This means public policy is not doing enough for families around the country to enable them to fill good jobs for which businesses are hiring.” Senator Portman and I have had a long time bill called the Jobs Act, which would enable Pell Grants to be used for high quality, short term career, and technical education offered at community colleges and other institutions.

There are 49 Senators, including many on this Committee, who are co-sponsors of the bill. I want to thank my Chair and Ranking Member because when we were debating the USICA bill, the Senate version of our competitiveness bill, they helped me sort of with a shoestring catch. We became the last amendment that was cleared for a manager’s package, meaning unanimous support in the Senate.

The manager’s package didn’t work out then. But last week the House passed their version of this bill, the COMPETES Act, and it became the last amendment that was added on a floor vote that was strongly bipartisan.

My question would be, if we allowed those who are Pell Grant eligible to use Pell Grants for high quality career and technical education, how would this solve or address some of the workplace barriers we are talking about?

Ms. WATTS. I can address that first. Thank you, Senator. And in Kentucky, we agree we think soft skills is too soft. We call it the central skills. And so we have actually put that curriculum in K through 12 education through statute several years ago.

But we very much in Kentucky are facing almost the exact same thing. We have a scholarship fund program funded through our Kentucky lottery system, and currently you can only use it at a traditional 4 year college or a community technical college. We are trying to revamp that at a state level with the Legislature this year to be able to use that scholarship money for those skills trainings.

For those welding schools, the pipefitter jobs, those things that we do need a credential or certificate for, to not just make it about a traditional 4 year or 2 year community technical college degree. So we in Kentucky very much agree with that premise.

Senator KAINE. Let me ask Ms. Mack since I quoted her, and then I have a second question and I will see if Ms. Sherard-Freeman and Mr. Beard would want to address. Ms. Mack.

Ms. MACK. No, we also completely agree. Short term probably would be a huge support, especially to our community colleges. And I think the key is, as you describe, is high quality. So making sure that it is going to industries and sectors, into programs that are resulting in good wages and employment afterwards.

Similar to Kentucky, New York is also taking sort of a stance around short term TAP, which is our temporary funding that sort of goes to support low income students in New York State. And so this combination of the part time TAP, and part time Pell could be

an incredible boon for our low-income students across New York State.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Ms. Mack. So my second question is this, and I will address it to Ms. Sherard-Freeman and Mr. Beard. Probably because of the way the title of this hearing is set up, and a little bit because of jurisdictional issues in the Senate, I was interested we had a discussion about workforce and not a single one of you mentioned immigration.

When we talk about immigration, it appears we almost always talk about the border. But when I talk to my employers, my Ag employers or my construction industry or my oystermen and watermen on the Chesapeake Bay, they are often talking to me about TPS or work visas. How much of our Nation's workforce needs need to incorporate smart immigration policy?

Ms. SHERARD-FREEMAN. Thank you for the question, Senator. So we believe smart immigration policy is essential to helping rebuild America's workforce. Detroit is on the receiving end right now of Afghan refugees.

We have approximately 200 housed in a hotel while we work to find permanent housing, and one of the first things we are doing is being sure that those refugees have the documentation and the resources they need to quickly connect with jobs that will lead to economic stability, support their housing, and ultimately help them be important parts of the community fabric in Detroit.

We did the same thing with Syrian refugees. It is the Mayor's practice, and we believe it is good business.

Senator KAINE. Chair Murray, could I ask Mr. Beard if he would answer that question?

The CHAIR. Absolutely.

Senator KAINE. Thank you.

Mr. BEARD. Senator, we would obviously be very supportive of a skills based immigration policy. We think that there is a shadow economy that is hurting many employers because they can't access workers that are here in the country, so we have got to find a solution to that. It is not an easy one, obviously.

But I know our employers are concerned about it because there are skilled skills and they can employ people with the skills necessary for the demand in an industrial and commercial construction sector that is thriving in Houston. So we would support it.

Senator KAINE. Great. Thank you. Thank you, Chair Murray.

The CHAIR. Thank you.

Senator HASSAN.

Senator HASSAN. Well, thank you, Chair Murray and our Ranking Member Burr. I thank you to all the witnesses. And I just want to thank my colleagues, Senator Casey, for his discussion on the subminimum wage, something I am eager to work with him on, and proud that New Hampshire was the first state to eliminate sub-minimum wages. And also a thank you to my colleague, Senator Kaine. I am a co-sponsor of the Jobs Act and we just got to keep working to get that done.

I want to start with a question to both Ms. Sherard-Freeman and Ms. Mack. When I was Governor of New Hampshire, now as a Senator, I have supported career pathway programs which combine work, education, and support services to expand opportunities for

workers who have fallen out of the labor force or need to make progress in their careers.

Through these programs, businesses partner with higher education institutions so that workers receive on the job training, while also earning recognized educational credentials to help advance in their careers.

This Congress I reintroduced the Gateway to Careers Act for Senators Young, Kaine, and Collins, a bipartisan bill to expand career pathways, as well as to provide wraparound support for workers who face barriers such as transportation or childcare costs.

I will start with you, Ms. Sherard-Freeman. Could you speak to how career pathways programs help workers to reenter or remain in the workforce? And then we will go to Ms. Mack.

Ms. SHERARD-FREEMAN. Thank you very much for the question, Senator. We believe that career pathways, the kinds of supports and the way you have structured them are essential to not only helping residents get on their feet toward the end of economic stability, but that they are essential to ensuring economic mobility.

Stability without mobility is a dead end, and we believe that the career pathways work that you have described is exactly what we need.

Senator HASSAN. Thank you very much. Ms. Mack.

Ms. MACK. Ma'am, I am going to second what my colleague in Detroit shared. I think this is the way you do workforce development effectively through career pathways and sector based strategies.

It is a true partnership between workers and employers. And I think a great example of that is registered apprenticeship. And we are sort of seeing, that registered apprenticeship is growing and expanding. And in our state, we are also working to figure out ways to engage more young adults in registered apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs because it does come with those wraparound support. They are often paid training opportunities.

In addition to that, there is a true career progression that we can watch and see and also communicate. So it is sort of the point before around transparency, you can communicate what the path looks like for individuals. And so I completely agree. I think career pathways is a way to do this work.

Senator HASSAN. Well, thank you. Ms. Mack, I have another question for you because I want to turn to some of the unique challenges facing workers in rural areas. Many workers who would like to remain in their local communities struggle to find the right training opportunities that align with businesses' needs, in many cases leaving them underemployed or forced to leave their communities for better job opportunities elsewhere.

One way to address this is better alignment between business needs and local education and training opportunities, something that Senator Collins and I hope to address by passing the Success for Rural Students and Communities Act. Ms. Mack, how have you worked to improve opportunities for workers in rural communities in New York?

Ms. MACK. Sure, and I think this is where local workforce are really crucial. And two of the examples that I provided, Chau-

tauqua County and the North Country are both some of the rural parts of the state.

What is crucial is being able to understand, as was described before, what the needs are of the individual. I think a lot of folks would assume it would be transportation or some would be childcare, but and often it is housing. There is a lot of constraints around housing in rural communities.

Sort of working with employers, I think the local workforce boards are able to better coordinate those educational institutions to meet their needs in the timing and sort of the distance that might be required, but also, more importantly, sort of utilizing virtual services to support workers and employers as well.

In Chautauqua, they are working directly with a group of manufacturers to sort of recruit and hire for their specific needs. And in North Country, they are designing a whole brand new program that is focused on recruiting young adults directly out of the K-12 system.

Senator HASSAN. Thank you. And that is a segway to a question for Ms. Sherard-Freeman, which is really about housing, because workers' difficulty in finding affordable housing can hurt their ability to remain in the workforce, makes it harder for businesses to attract workers that they need.

One way to address this is obviously for communities to invest in safe and affordable workforce housing options. How does access to stable housing impact people's ability to find and retain employment? And have you worked to address this in Detroit?

Ms. SHERARD-FREEMAN. Oh, thank you so much for the question, Senator. In Detroit, we believe that economic mobility hinges on stable housing, and we have worked diligently to ensure that affordable housing is part of that equation.

We really believe that affordable housing should be the basis for economic development in all neighborhood plans. Affordable housing as the basis for economic development, not simply a response to economic growth. If you wait for the point that it is a response to economic growth, it is too late.

We are so very pleased to have the Choice HUD Award in Detroit, building on Ford Motor Company's \$1 billion investment in Corktown. Affordable housing will be a significant part of that choice grant. We have a \$30 million grant, and it blends together housing, affordable housing workforce, the wraparound support you have described. We believe it will be a model.

Senator HASSAN. Thank you very much, and thank you, Madam Chair, for letting me go over here.

The CHAIR. Thank you.

Senator Murphy.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Thank you all for your testimony today. I remember looking at a really interesting data set, right on the back end of the Great Recession, when we had recovered most of our employment. And what it showed was that though over that period of time, a lot of people had become unemployed and then a lot of people had been reemployed, there had been this really fascinating shift in terms of age demographics.

What had happened during that time was that older, the percentage of the older workers or the percentage of older Americans in the workforce had dramatically increased, whereas the percentage of younger Americans in the workforce had plummeted. You had essentially seen this shift of young people in the workforce coming out and older people going in.

The sort of long term data here is pretty frightening, right between 2000 and 2018, workforce participation rates for those ages 16 to 19 fell from about one-half of the population to one-third. That is stunning in an 18-year period of time, and we know it just got worse during the pandemic because we saw again a bottoming out of summer job opportunities for teenagers.

I wanted to focus just, and I will ask this to the panel and maybe directed initially to you, Mr. Beard, but then open it up to others. I want to talk about barriers to employment for teenagers and for young workers, because it is those early work experiences that set the platform for later success.

We just have a stunningly fewer number of kids who are having this positive workforce experiences when they are teenagers. And if you have these barriers later on in life, they are just compounded by a lack of exposure to the workforce into job skills when you are in those early formative years.

Are there specific things we need to be thinking about in order to overcome this pull out of the workforce of teenagers? Because it seems to me, given the data telling us something has happened very quickly to that population, we need to have a targeted policy to address those barriers.

Mr. BEARD. I think there are several things, Senator, and thank you for the question. The first is we need to start obviously in the school system and creating opportunity there. We have got some really good examples in Houston where our employers have partnered with the school districts and the community colleges to do pre-apprenticeship programs that then provide summer internships at \$13, \$14 an hour that create that culture.

It also has the employers' responsibility of working with the school system to actually ensure, to Senator Kane's point, through developing the essential skills. I think the second one is Mayor Turner in Houston has advanced his Hire Houston Youth Program, which really engages the business community to provide summer—paid summer internships to youth in Houston.

Then third, I think there are opportunities about how do we work with community based organizations to support students as they get ready to go into internships during their school years. But then at the other point is, how do we open up the funnel with employers once they have left the school districts to find pathways, which is a really difficult thing with opportunity youth because they have disconnected from the system? I will let others respond.

Senator MURPHY. Sure.

Ms. SHERARD-FREEMAN. If I might, Senator. We are in the seventh year in Detroit of Detroit's Young Talent, which is the city's summer youth employment program that the Mayor launched when he took office. Every year we place more than 8,000 young people into opportunities.

We target 14 to 24 year olds, so certainly covering the opportunity youth that Mr. Beard is referencing. These are essential skills jobs. These are jobs working in our fire cadets and with our police department and with community based organizations.

We think it is an essential way to ensure that the pipeline of talent of young people are engaged, and more importantly, have relationships with local employers so that over the long term, they have an opportunity baked in into their future.

Senator MURPHY. I thank you for these responses. This intentionality about making sure that young people have those experiences, which does often involve some amount of subsidy, I think is required in an economy where so many more older workers now need to stay in the workforce longer.

You would love it if the private sector had the solution for these kids. But ultimately, with so many folks needing to stay in the workforce longer in order to make sure they have enough for retirement in order to make sure they have food on the table, we are going to have to be a little bit more intentional in the mechanisms by which we use, sometimes using subsidy to get those kids the skills they need early on. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The CHAIR. Thank you.

Senator Smith.

Senator SMITH. Thank you very much, Madam Chair and Ranking Member. And it is great to be a part of this panel and so exciting to see the interest in this issue. I want to just actually start by following-up on the questions that Senator Murphy was just asking. I will—maybe I will go to you, Ms. Mack, on this. I am thinking especially about youth workforce programs and especially pre-apprenticeships, about pre-apprenticeships.

In Minnesota, we have got a great example of this in a program called Youth Build, which is a very successful pre-apprenticeship program. A lot of times, though, these strong programs they won't kick in until students are already at risk of falling off track, or they really can't get exposure to the programs until they are 16, and then by then, they are already sort of not really clear how their own talents are going to connect into the job opportunities that they have.

I am wondering kind of how we think that some of these efforts might be reformed. I have a piece of legislation with Senator Graham and Senator Wyden and Senator Collins to introduce a bill called the Youth Workforce Readiness Act. And what it would do is to pull in afterschool providers to help connect youth with local employers through things like job shadowing or career exploration or internships, and of course, registered apprenticeships.

Just another way of connecting young folks with what might be their first job to get at the challenges that Senator Murphy just explained so well. So maybe, Ms. Mack, could you just tell us a little bit more about what you think we need to be doing to connect young people sooner to career opportunities? If you agree with that, if you agree, it is a timing challenge as well as equality quality of opportunity challenge.

Ms. MACK. Sure, absolutely. And I think in New York City in particular, again, the ecosystem of providers who do workforce development often are also engaged in sort of after school supportive

housing. They run sort of a full service approach in terms of engaging New Yorkers. I think where we find the most success is where they are subsidized work based learning or workforce development opportunities or project based learning that is again coordinated with the K–12 system.

I think for part of that, we would need to sort of extend—expand under the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act, the waiver that is in place right now around a serving exclusively out-of-school youth. We have heard from our members there is interest in doing exactly what you are describing around making sure that more young adults who are currently in school have access to supportive programs and dropout prevention.

But in addition to that, I think it is this need to be able to directly connect to a wage based employment. And so in our state, we have a summer employment program that has operated for about 30 years at this point. It is funded primarily through TANF. And in New York City alone, they serve about 100,000 young adults each year with their sort of summer youth employment program.

Again, I think the connection between K–12, but then also directly to work is crucial. So going back to Senator Kaine’s comments before about success skills, I mean, I don’t know about you, but I certainly learned a whole lot my first job about what I could and couldn’t do at work. And I think that giving young adults that experience is probably the most essential thing we could do at this point.

Senator SMITH. Absolutely. My first job was getting up at 6:30 in the morning to clean the Glazer at the donut shop where I worked, and I was 16 years old, and I learned a lot about like showing up was not an option. I learned a lot about a lot of things at that job that time. Ms. Sherard-Freeman, I wanted to just follow-up with you.

I so appreciate you sharing your experience about the work that you are doing in Detroit, which is really impressive. I really especially appreciated your testimony about how, when people are facing challenges that keep them from working, it could be childcare or transportation or housing, I want to associate myself strongly with the questions that Senator Hassan was asking nothing else will work no matter what kind of great training opportunities or workforce opportunities they have if the other things in their life aren’t working.

Minnesota workforce development professionals are telling me that in the next bill reauthorization that they would really like to see some additional flexibility so that they can think about how to serve families as part of a two generation approach. For example, got a family member who wants to boost their training because another family member has become dislocated from their jobs.

Or you have got a client who is working with both WIOA and TANF, and how can we make that two generation approach work better? So, Ms. Sherard-Freeman, can you just tell me what else you think we should be keeping in mind when it comes to best practices about taking this two generation approach?

Ms. SHERARD-FREEMAN. Thank you so much for the question. So the flexibility that you have just described, being able to blend and

braid funding across WIOA and TANF, if we had that same degree of freedom to make every tax dollar work in the maximum—toward maximum value, being able to braid funding across not just the Department of Labor and Health and Human Services, but the Department of Education, and where there are other opportunities to reduce the silos so that we can make \$1 tax dollar work like \$5, that is the kind of—those are the kinds of freedoms that we need to weave together funding.

To make your point, our summer youth employment program in Detroit, Grow Detroit's Young Talent, is an \$11.4 million program. And we are very fortunate to have roughly a quarter of a million, half a million dollars each year from our partners at the State of Michigan Labor and Economic Opportunity Division.

The rest of it, we fundraise. We are very fortunate to have good, strong, philanthropic partners, but fundraising to the tune of about \$10 million a year, we believe that is a place where legislation and Federal support should kick in for our young people before they become at risk.

Senator SMITH. Thank you so much, Madam Chair. I know I am out of time, but I want to just note, I remember so clearly working at the state level and trying to figure out how to get flexibility in these very complicated workforce training programs. And I mean, I remember so many times the administrators saying of course, we would like to have more money, but what we really need is more flexibility so that we can make every dollar work in exactly the way that it could work if we had that flexibility. So, just thank you for that.

The CHAIR. Thank you very much.
Senator Braun.

Senator BRAUN. Thank you, Madam Chair. We have been talking about workforce for such a long time. Senator Hickenlooper and I recently did a Subcommittee hearing on it. I am going to draw upon what was the biggest issue in my home State of Indiana pre-COVID was workforce. I would hear workforce, workforce, workforce, some rural broadband, depending on your county, and affordable housing.

Now I am going to go back to when I first started paying attention to it was when I was CEO of my own company, when it was really starting to grow in the last 10 years of the 37 years I was doing that and looked into my own school districts in my County. And I think the issue with workforce, everything I have heard today is tangential. I think the biggest issue with workforce is that we have almost stigmatized some of those pathways. And I will give you this little vignette to hear how shocked I was.

Coming from the lowest unemployment county in the highest manufacturing per capita county in the State of Indiana, we as employers—mine was a logistics and distribution business, all the other companies were manufacturing. It was depressing to hear that in our own schools, of the 60,000 to 80,000 jobs that we had begging, they weren't for 4 year degrees. Maybe a little bit of STEM, but generally a better life skills training in high school. I took industrial arts when I went to high school, and that is probably something I remember more about than almost any other class.

But almost all of those were gone, and it was AP—the only way you can be successful in life is getting a 4-year degree. Well, the market doesn't call for that. Parents have now had a recent graduate or two that has a degreed son or daughter back in the basement because it was an ill-advised degree with no market. Half the kids that get on that journey for a 4-year degree don't complete it.

State Board of Education and all of the educational institutions within states, I think have oversold that. We ship twice as many degrees out of our state as we keep within 4 year degrees. I would love to see high school curriculum get back to the basics and start teaching some of these skills that we would all love to see there where we can even train. New employers have been too dependent on the system, too. Now they are getting with it.

I would like to hear, Ms. Watts, Mr. Beard, what you think of what I have just said? How important is that to create incomes—close though it would be almost \$1 billion in Indiana if we just did a better job at what I am talking about.

Ms. WATTS. Thank you, Senator, for that question. In Kentucky, your neighbor to the south, we too are a manufacturing and logistics hub, and so those careers are very important. And I think we have actually done quite a disservice the last several years when we would hear the rhetoric, college isn't for everyone.

What we should have been saying is that something post high school is for everyone. Whether it is a degree, credentials, certificate, 2-year education, something after high school was for everyone. And so in Kentucky, we are actually even looking at using scholarship dollars for students to be able to go to those pathways that we will need in our logistics and our manufacturing sectors because we know those are the jobs that are needed right now. They are good paying jobs.

They can usually have a year of training and get right into them. So we are completely aligned but I do think it is going to be an alignment between the business community and the education community as well.

In Kentucky, our community and technical college system has really been at the forefront of making sure we have the students that are going to meet those needs of our employers in Kentucky.

Senator BRAUN. Thank you. Mr. Beard.

Mr. BEARD. Senator, I would say amen first. Second, the initiative I specifically lead focuses on those particular occupations. 30 percent of those roles that require education and skills beyond high school and less than 4 years of college are what we need in Houston. And like Kentucky, we have a significant manufacturing sector a health care sector an automotive sector, transportation.

All of those jobs, you can leave high school with a good career in technical education program and find a pathway. And I think it requires two things. One, the employer leadership to communicate that back into the school system and partner differently with the school districts and the community colleges.

Second, we need to change the awareness and perception and narrative that is going on. And we did some focus group research to understand kind of the perceptions and misperceptions that families and parents have related to that all because of the 4-year narrative. And so we have to do a different job. Thank you.

Senator BRAUN. Thank you. And real briefly, in closing, not to mention that higher education, post-secondary education has now eclipsed the increase in the cost of health care each year, and that would be the No. 2 issue in this country that has got to be addressed as well, where it is a fixed cost, just with different curriculum to do the things in high school that I think cure a lot of the problems we contend with after high school. Thank you.

The CHAIR. Thank you.

Senator Rosen.

Senator ROSEN. Well, thank you, Madam Chair and Ranking Member Burr for holding this important hearing today. I want to build upon what Senator Braun is talking about because we do have to scale and expand our workforce continually as jobs continue to grow and change and the needs change. But one area we really need to do that in, I believe, is our cyber workforce. Because right now there is nearly 600,000 job openings in cybersecurity in the U.S., more than 3,500 job openings in my home State of Nevada alone, according to Cyber Seek and the Federal Government cybersecurity jobs map.

As these jobs go unfilled, cyber-attacks against our schools, our health care systems, our critical infrastructure sectors, well they are just increasing in frequency and severity, including in Nevada. So to address the skills gap, I recently introduced the bipartisan Cyber Ready Workforce Act with Senator Blackburn, a bill that would direct the Department of Labor to award grants to workforce intermediaries to increase access to registered apprenticeship programs in cybersecurity that would lead to industry recognized certification.

The certification will prepare Americans for these in-demand jobs that are going to help protect our critical infrastructure and our data systems. And this will also help support and fund wraparound support services for cybersecurity apprentices, including and assisting with cost of transportation, housing, and childcare services. So Ms. Mack, how do you think expanding and improving upon proven models like registered apprenticeship programs help us address and fulfill some of the long term cyber workforce shortages that we are creating?

Ms. MACK. I will tell you that one of the most successful apprenticeship programs we have in New York State is related to cyber security, and it comes out of a partnership with local community college near Utica and the local workforce board.

It has become a direct pipeline for candidates, primarily refugees, who live in that community to get into cybersecurity. And so it has been a proven pathway. It has been incredibly successful.

Most of the folks end up going and working for the Government. And I think again, if the more we could do to scale and expand that statewide, become a model that everyone looks to in our state, and is hoping to sort of spread across the state. So I think it is exactly what we need to do.

Senator ROSEN. How important do you think those wraparound services are for apprenticeship programs if we want to remove those equity and access barriers for student housing, perhaps, or especially for women, perhaps childcare?

Ms. MACK. They are the difference maker between whether or not people can participate in training and, or keep a job. And so again, I think that the wraparound supports are crucial, and ultimately, as they shared, I think that they can ultimately make the difference about whether or not someone's going to be able to make it through that program.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you. I appreciate that. I want to move on to the pandemic's impact on Nevada's travel and tourism workers, of course it is tourism all across the country, but particularly important in Nevada. And because workers in the travel, tourism, and hospitality sectors, they really are the backbone for us in Nevada and our economy. They make our state a global destination, from everything from vacations, of course, to conventions, outdoor tourism.

But unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating and disproportionate impact on the workers in my state, with roughly 63,000 jobs in tourism and hospitality, they still have not returned nearly 2 years after many businesses closed in March 2020.

Ms. Mack and then Ms. Sherard-Freeman, in the short time I have left, what lessons did we learn a decade ago from the Great Recession about how to address worker displacement in the travel, tourism, and hospitality sectors? How can we apply those lessons today? What should the Federal Government be doing to help potentiate getting people into—back to the job they want or into a new job? Ms. Mack, you can go first.

Ms. MACK. Yes, I will go quickly that this is a huge issue, of course, in your state as well, with New York City's economy relying pretty heavily on tourism and hospitality. I think one of the challenges we found is the need to be able to prop-up those small businesses to be able to ensure that individuals can go back to work, there are places to go back to work.

But in addition to that, again addressing those barriers to employment and the wraparound supports, in order for someone to be able to step out of employment and then go into a training to be able to advance to the next career.

We have worked really closely with Restaurant Opportunities Center, and they have so many stories about workers who are concerned about not having the right wraparound supports to be able to, again, go into that training to advance their next career.

Senator ROSEN. I only have a few seconds left, so Ms. Sherard-Freeman, I will let you respond on the record, we will submit our questions for the record in order to let my colleagues who are behind me ask questions. Thank you so much.

The CHAIR. Thank you.

Senator Hickenlooper.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank all of you. This is the kind of hearing that I think the Senate really benefits from. As Senator Braun mentioned earlier, we convened a meeting with the Employment and Workplace Safety Subcommittee last week on health care workforce.

We talked about a lot of the challenges facing that workforce. But I think that the—as the 21st economy continues to evolve, upskilling and reskilling opportunities are going to expand and

grow in number, not diminish. It is going to be in a variety of industries, not just health care.

I will start, Mr. Beard, with you. So you have discussed a little bit of how the upscale Houston initiative is making progress. Maybe a little more on that in addressing the skills gap. But how does it—how do could we begin thinking about it as a model for the rest of the country? In other words, what elements do you think are easily translatable into a scale, a national scale?

Mr. BEARD. Thank you, Senator. So a couple of things. One, I think the model and the approach that the U.S. Chamber Foundation developed with talent pipeline management that engages employers to talk about the pipelines they need to develop is critically important.

That an employer, no matter whether they are in Indiana or Kentucky or Texas, are getting a similar experience in terms of engagement, because it takes that kind of engagement to then bring in the community based organizations that provide the wraparound services and career navigation.

But also, I think to this point that we have been talking about, we need to find a way to align the various services in a very different way so that it allows for co-location across referrals across systems because right now it is siloed. You go to the workforce system, you deal with a community based organization, you go to the Career Services Office of the Community College, and we need to find different ways to optimize those resources to provide those supports.

Then I think finally, how do we continue to incent employers, particularly on the education and upskilling piece of this to support education benefits for the front line workers, because we know similar to the conversation about hospitality or Amazon or any of those other employers, that those jobs have opportunities, but how do employers support folks upskilling into other roles that are adjacent and that are important to them. Because they don't want those workers in those roles permanently, they want to kind of flow them through.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Alright. Absolutely. Ms. Mack, and I appreciate the background, work hard, be nice to all people. I made a pledge and followed through when I first became Mayor of Denver in 2003 that I would visit every public school in Denver in my first 4 years. No one told me there were 161 schools.

But I rapidly within about 40 schools I figured I had something to say to kids and it was always, I came—ended up with work hard, be nice, never quit. So you should put your little never quit down there on the bottom. Obviously, we need to invest in students and workers if we are going to be prepared for this 21st century challenge.

I think increasing access to apprenticeships, making sure that multiple working pathways are available, that is critical to the success both for the workforce but also for employers.

As a Subcommittee Chair and often with Senator Braun, I am, or I should say we are focused on expanding opportunities for apprenticeships and especially youth apprenticeships.

How can we be doing a better job, and I think this is a problem we have all faced, and you, many of you, a couple of you have

touched on this, but not only reaching the students, but their parents, because so much of what they think is cool or is acceptable is filtered through their conversations with their parents. So in terms of promoting opportunities and apprenticeship, how could we do a better job of reaching out to parents?

Ms. MACK. I think it is parents and young adults. And so across our state, there are a number of events that have now popped up, sponsored by local workforce systems, to get young adults from schools and their parents to come out for a day to meet with businesses, to try out some of the equipment, and to learn about careers.

I think those have proven super successful in our ability to help people understand that these are pathways to good jobs. But also it doesn't mean that this is a terminal end, and your career stops here. That there are still opportunities to go on to post-secondary following training and an apprenticeship program.

Again, I think that ultimately more career exposure is necessary and making sure that we are getting to young adults and getting to parents because most people don't even know what companies exist in their region. And so this ability to sort of show, actually physically show them facilities makes a huge difference.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Great. Now somehow I am out of time. I am not sure exactly how that happened, but I have other questions I will put forward. I really am excited by the work that all of you are doing, and I think there has got to be a way we can synthesize this and orchestrate it in a way that really does help our workforce, but also our business community at the same time. Thank you.

The CHAIR. Thank you. I believe that is all of our Senators who had questions today. Senator Burr, no closing remarks. Let me just thank all of our witnesses for really an important conversation, and all of our Senators who were here today to ask very thoughtful questions.

I think we all are very focused on this and working to make sure that everybody can participate in our economy to the best of their ability. So Ms. Mack, Ms. Watts, Mr. Beard, Ms. Sherard-Freeman, thank you so much for sharing your time and your expertise.

For any Senators who do wish to ask additional questions, questions for the record will be due in 10 business days, March 2nd at 5 p.m. And with that, the Committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:41 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]