

**THE POWER OF APPRENTICESHIPS:
FASTER, BETTER PATHS
TO PROSPEROUS JOBS
AND LESS WASTE IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

HEARING

BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC GROWTH, ENERGY
POLICY, AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS
OF THE

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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- * Article, AEI, “Innovation in Apprenticeships More of the Same”; submitted by Rep. Fallon.
- * Article, AEI, “Outcomes-Based Higher Education Funding”; submitted by Rep. Fallon.
- * Statement for the Record, The Foundation for Research on Equal Opportunity; submitted by Rep. Fallon.
- * Report, “Task Force on Apprenticeship Expansion”, Final Report to POTUS dated May 10, 2018; submitted by Rep. Fallon.

The documents listed above are available at: docs.house.gov.

**THE POWER OF APPRENTICESHIPS:
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Wednesday, October 25, 2023

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC GROWTH, ENERGY
POLICY, AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS

Washington, D.C.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 4:05 p.m., in room 2154, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Pat Fallon [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Fallon, Fry, Bush, Brown, Stansbury, Norton, and Krishnamoorthi.

Mr. FALLON. This hearing of the Subcommittee of Economic Growth, Energy Policy, and Regulatory Affairs will come to order.

I want to welcome everyone on this historic day. We have a Speaker of the House. I believe he is the 55th one.

Without objection, the Chair may declare a recess at any time.

I recognize myself for the purpose of making an opening statement.

Now, unlike a lot of the hearings that you hear and see on television in Washington, and particularly on the Oversight Committee, this hearing is not intended at all to be partisan in any way. We are talking about, and we heard speeches, very good speeches today on the floor about offering real solutions to the American people. And I am looking forward to having a very constructive and completely bipartisan discussion, hopefully, on America's need for highly skilled labor.

For 247 years, we built the greatest country history has ever known, and now we need to maintain it. And in order to maintain that—and I know, I would say, I would venture to guess, a lot of my colleagues, everyone that comes into our office, every businessperson or business owner, and when we ask them, how is your employees, do you have enough employees, are you looking, are you short on labor? Every single one of them, does not matter what field they are in, they say, we are short on labor, particularly and it has been very acute after the pandemic and after COVID really hit us, and it hit us hard.

So again, for decades, Congress has spent billions, without pause, pushing students into undergraduate and graduate programs after high school. And you know what, getting a college degree is great, but that is not going to be the best fit for everyone, and we need to acknowledge that and not try to put a square peg in a round hole, per se.

Case in point is my brother-in-law. He got a 2-year degree, a technical degree, and he is one of the smartest and most knowledgeable people that I know. Mostly self-taught. And he just so happened—he was an electrician. He was in the union. He is a Massachusetts Democrat. No longer, but that is where he started out as. He is a business owner now, employs 150 people. They are all union. And he is a multimillionaire. That is the American Dream. And he does not have a 4-year degree.

Most of these folks, these high-tech wizards, left college to found these billion-dollar companies. So, I think we just need to acknowledge that.

And according to an NIFB [sic] study that was conducted last year, almost half of the business owners reported having job openings that could not be filled. Again, lack of labor.

So, despite this enormous taxpayer investment in higher education, businesses are struggling to find qualified workers who can do the job. And we all need to do a better job.

Every President of the United States that I have been paying attention to for the last 40 years, when they have their bully pulpit—we all have pulpits, but they are smaller ones—need to celebrate people that have skills in labor and remove the stigma. There should not be a stigma at all. You should hold your head up high. And if you are a plumber, you should have a big—like Superman, like a big P. I am a plumber. I got a trade that I can survive in this world in, and I am contributing to my community. And when you contribute to your community, you are contributing to your country.

So, you know—so after these expensive degrees, they are just getting more and more expensive. The Federal student loan debt is over \$1.6 trillion, and it only seems like the cost of the degrees have increased. Remember when inflation was at 2 percent? Well, it is higher education. They are going up 9 and 10 percent. It was completely out of whack. And it is just not fair to our youth. And we need to be honest with our youth. They can succeed. They can live the American Dream, and it does not have to go through a 4-year college.

So, how is our Nation's manufacturers and businesses expected to find qualified jobseekers when we are not effectively developing the talent and the training that they need? And so, I would like to see career and technical education programs, which are another component of helping students with practical skills be successful.

I remember in seventh grade they taught us how to sew. And that is just a little trade. I mean, I am not going to get a job sewing, but I know how to do it because they taught me in seventh grade. And if they did not, I would have no idea what to do with that. So, I think like—I will get to our witnesses—but having shop back in schools—and my father, who passed away a couple of years ago, taught at a vocational high school. It was a 2-tier track.

So, that was—those are good things we need to revisit. You know, not everything they did in the 60's and 70's was wrong. And not everything we do today is right. So, I think we need to not reinvent the wheel and just move forward.

But the high cost of participation in some Federal programs make it difficult for employers to take advantage of some of the things and the Federal apprenticeships and what have you. But we need to look at the most efficient way to do that. And, of course, we have to also understand that they are vulnerable to fraud, waste, and abuse.

So, listen, there are some great people here. I want to learn. I want to ask great questions. I want to thank you all for coming.

And we probably have votes in a little under an hour on this very historic day. So, I am going to yield right now to my Ranking Member, Cori Bush, for the purposes of her making an opening statement.

Ms. BUSH. All right. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

St. Louis and I are here today to discuss the critical pathways that apprenticeships work to provide well-paying jobs in high-skilled, in-demand industries.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2018, there were nearly 600,000 active apprentices in more than 23,000 registered apprenticeship programs across this country. For the industries like healthcare—in the healthcare field, these job opportunities fill crucial staffing gaps left in the wake of the pandemic.

According to reporting in the *Wall Street Journal*, the number of apprenticeships has increased about 50 percent over the past decade. Major U.S. companies have created apprenticeship programs to train the next generation of skilled employees, including companies like JP Morgan and Delta Airlines.

Research shows that completion of an apprenticeship means more than just a job. It means embarking on a career that can enable dedicated workers to be able to care for their families without having to work three jobs. It also means acquiring skills that can provide a ladder into financial stability rather than a cycle of inescapable debt.

Today, I am extremely proud to welcome to the Subcommittee Ms. Apryle Gladney, the Associate Vice Chancellor for Human Resources Recruitment and Employee Relations at Washington University in St. Louis, proudly located in Missouri's First congressional District, along with your director.

Ms. Gladney will share with us how Washington University has created an innovative medical apprenticeship program that bolsters the diversity of the healthcare industry one student at a time.

As a nurse, I know firsthand how important it is for our healthcare professionals to be as diverse as our communities, particularly during a time of historic challenges in the medical and nursing fields.

To foster these types of apprentice programs and success stories, increasing Federal support—it is vital. Obtaining a higher education has never been more expensive yet necessary for career development and financial stability. The astronomical cost of higher education in our country is a disgrace. And for me, I say it all the time, it should be debt free. In addition to eliminating high tuition

that leads to student debt, our communities also deserve a variety of pathways that lead to gainful employment and diversify our workforce.

For Fiscal Year 2024, Congress authorized more than \$1.3 billion for the Perkins program, which provides support to career and technical education programs, and it should be fully funded. Similarly, through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the WIOA—there we go—WIOA, Congress has appropriated billions to support training and adult literacy programs. And more Federal funding we know is needed to support an increasingly diverse workforce.

My Republican colleagues have proposed steep cuts to these programs that would devastate job training and apprenticeship programs and communities like mine across our country. For example, Republicans' draft Labor-H appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2024 sought to eliminate funding for adult and youth job training programs under WIOA, which would cut across access for more than 400,000 adults and youths.

Finally, I note that there are many postsecondary educational options available for students, but not all of them are accessible to everyone. We want all options to be accessible to all students. All meaning all.

I join my colleagues in our commitment to that financial need, and we understand that financial need should not stand in a student's way of accessing the educational opportunity that is right for them. And whether that is an apprenticeship, whether that is a community college, or whether that is a 4-year degree, that is up to them.

I deeply appreciate Washington University's efforts to remove barriers that can prevent students from attending that prestigious institution in my district. And I applaud the Biden-Harris Administration for their efforts to relieve the crushing weight of student debt in this Nation.

Thank you to all of our witnesses for being here. And thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this hearing.

Mr. FALLON. Thank you.

Joining us this afternoon is a group of experts representing several different corners of the country, each bringing, well, a unique perspective to these issues.

First, we have Dr. Paul Winfree, President and CEO of the Economic Policy Innovation Center, or EPIC. And Dr. Winfree has served in top management and policy roles in the White House, the U.S. Senate, and several think tanks.

And we have Erin Davis Valdez, serves as the policy director for Next Generation Texas, an education initiative of the Texas Public Policy Foundation.

We have Dr. Casey Sacks, who serves as the President of BridgeValley Community and Technical College in West Virginia. She previously served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Community Colleges at the U.S. Department of Education from 2018 to 2021.

And then we have my friend, Tony Ewing, from the great free state of Texas, who is the founder and President of Advanced Fixtures, Incorporated, located in Farmersville, Texas. Mr. Ewing

founded his business 40 years ago from scratch and currently employs about 150 people. And Advanced Fixtures specializes in manufacturing metal and wood retail store fixtures.

And finally, we have Apryle Gladney, who serves as the Associate Vice Chancellor for H.R. Recruitment and Employment Relations for Washington University in St. Louis. Very good school.

Pursuant to Committee Rule 9(g), the witnesses will please stand and raise their right hands.

Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony that you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God.

Wonderful.

Let the record show that the witnesses answered in the affirmative.

Please take your seats.

So, we appreciate you all for being here, and we look forward to your testimony. Let me remind you that we read your written statements, and they will appear in full in the hearing record.

Please limit your oral statements, if you could, to 5 minutes. As a reminder, please press the little button that says "talk" in front of you. And when you begin to speak, you will have a light; it will be green for 4 minutes, and then it will go to yellow for 1 minute, and then red. And if you can kind of wrap it up when you see the red. You know, it is kind of like a yellow light, you kind of zip through. So, if you could treat it like that, that would be great.

And I now recognize Dr. Paul Winfree for his opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF DR. PAUL WINFREE
PRESIDENT AND CEO
ECONOMIC POLICY INNOVATION CENTER**

Mr. WINFREE. Thank you so much.

And thank you, Chairman Fallon and Ranking Member Bush. And thank you for your opening statements. You know, we are going to try to add to them this afternoon, but they were really phenomenal, and thank you so much for your comments.

Apprenticeships have existed for hundreds of years. However, the apprenticeship model has evolved dramatically alongside the labor market. Today, vocational training and apprenticeships can improve labor market outcomes, increase income, and expand social mobility.

But the U.S. has limited vocational education. In fact, vocational education in the U.S. has declined since the 1970's, when about half of all students were enrolled in a vocational track. Today, less than 20 percent of students are enrolled in vocational education.

Most European countries, on the other hand, have policies that foster apprenticeships. For example, Austria, Denmark, Germany, Norway, and Switzerland all have apprenticeship programs incorporated into general education.

This afternoon, I want to highlight a few successful models that perhaps we can learn from. In the 1990's, Norway integrated vocational and general education for high school students, while expanding apprenticeship access. These reforms increase income in adulthood as well as economic mobility. In fact, earning a vocational degree and going into an apprenticeship program after grad-

uation in Norway amounted to almost \$30,000 in additional earnings at age 30 compared to earning no degree.

To expand apprenticeships in STEM, the United Kingdom is experimenting with degree apprenticeships that allow students to work while earning a bachelor's or master's degree. These students generally graduate without student debt, and they have a median wage of more than \$40,000 while they are in the program, while they are students.

Why might similar vocational education and apprenticeship models be successful in the United States? Well, my co-author, Rachel Greszler, and I recently found that younger cohorts, those between the ages of 20 and 24, were slow to join the labor market after the U.S. economy began to recover from the initial pandemic-related closures. We also found that this cohort was not going to college at higher rates despite not working. This reflects a reversal of historic patterns because younger cohorts had been joining the labor market and going to school at increasingly higher rates since the recovery from the 2008 and 2009 financial crisis.

We propose that apprenticeships can bring people back into the labor market by providing a path from vocational-education high school to job upon graduation. Furthermore, industry-led apprenticeships create an incentive for businesses to invest in skills for their workers that increase productivity for the firm, while simultaneously increasing competitiveness of the worker. This translates into higher wages, as we all know.

In countries where robust apprenticeship programs exist, employment for men under the age of 35 is significantly higher for those who complete a vocational degree compared to a typical general education degree in high school. Just saying that again. For those under the age of 35, in countries that have an apprenticeship program, employment is higher than for those who just graduate high school.

The U.S. education system requires more of a focus on vocational learning to be successful for its students. This will require reducing any perceived stigma from vocational education. Many scholars have noted that vocational education in the U.S. has tended to segregate economically disadvantaged students or is an alternative track for underperforming students. In contrast, the Norwegian model improves the quality of vocational education while better connecting it with a paid apprenticeship on graduation. This helps reduce the stigma through increased economic opportunities.

That said, reform must begin at the local level, in our high schools and community colleges—and some of my colleagues are going to talk about that after I am finished here—and it should also involve close partnerships with job creators. This way America's students will have access to cutting-edge technical skills and mentorship by leaders in their fields. Fostering such an educational environment has the potential to increase innovation, productivity, and wages for a group of students who are currently being left behind.

The Federal Government can encourage necessary innovation in the education system by first doing no harm. During the Trump Administration, U.S. Department of Labor initiated Industry-Recognized Apprenticeship Programs, or IRAPs. The new IRAP model

created a pathway for flexible, industry-driven apprenticeships that were an alternative to the traditional models that had been recognized by the Federal Government. This led to 130 new apprenticeship programs in high-demand fields, including nursing, during a time when our country needed them the most. However, last year, the Biden Administration canceled this initiative, and reverted back to the pre-2017 policy that has failed to demonstrate success beyond the male-dominated manual labor trades.

I would encourage that Congress revisit the IRAP model and other successful models of vocational education and apprenticeships, not simply as an alternative to the education system, but as a core element to better prepare students for an evolving economy.

Thank you very much, and I look forward to questions.

Mr. FALLON. Thank you very much.

Ms. Valdez is recognized for her 5-minute opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF MS. ERIN DAVIS VALDEZ
POLICY DIRECTOR
NEXT GENERATION TEXAS
TEXAS PUBLIC POLICY FOUNDATION**

Ms. VALDEZ. Thank you.

Chairman Fallon, Ranking Member Bush, and Subcommittee Members, thank you so much for inviting me here today. I am so encouraged that this Committee is taking up this vitally important topic.

As you have heard today, and I think it bears repeating because the statistics should be emblazoned on all of our hearts and minds, college for all is not working for all. There is a \$1.77 trillion student loan crisis in this country, and that is tripled since 2008. Fifty-two percent of college graduates graduate with debt. The average amount is \$29,000. Only 62 percent of students graduate within 6 years.

The New York Reserve Bank tells us that an increasing percentage of recent college graduates are underemployed, with about 41 percent holding a job that does not require a degree, and about the same percent, 38 percent, regretting their choice of degree.

Employers tell us in survey after survey—and we will hear probably from one of them today—that they cannot find qualified workers. There are 9.6 million job openings right now. 1.4 million fewer Americans are in the workforce than in February 2020. As of early 2022, over 7 million prime-age males were neither working nor looking for work. That represents 11 percent of the total prime-age male labor pool and three times the percentage from 1965.

The costs are stark. Open positions cost employers dearly. According to one estimate, America spends about \$1.1 trillion annually on postsecondary education and training. A recent Gallup Poll shows that Americans are rapidly losing trust in higher education. Only 36 percent say that they have a great deal or a lot of faith in higher education, which is 20 points lower than 2015.

The causes, I think, are worth examining if we are going to look at possible solutions. The most glaring cause of this is a set of misaligned incentives. Providers and even incumbent workers benefit from prolonged required training periods. Higher education uses a Carnegie Unit system, which was originated in the early 20th cen-

tury, based literally on seat time, how much time you spend being instructed. That is an input. Even recent moves toward so-called outcomes-based funding models could use improvement because sometimes they are based on outputs, like degrees, certificates, even, you know, a high school diploma. These are outputs. These are not outcomes.

Our apprenticeship system, as we have just heard, is antiquated. Employers in many cases are daunted by the red tape of a registered apprenticeship program. In some cases, well-meaning regulations or liability concerns restrict the kind of work that students still in high school actually can do, which limits their ability to gain meaningful on-the-job experience while they are still in high school and extends the amount of time it will take them to enter the workforce.

Both systems depend to a large extent on time-based or time-restricted inputs, not mastery or ability to demonstrate skills. This drives up the cost of higher education and vocational education. We need a student-centered system.

The good news is there are solutions, and we have got a couple from Texas that I would like to share with you today. First is a system that is based on a funding model that is called the returned-value funding model. This was innovated by the Texas State Technical College system. It is a statewide system. It is not a community college, it is a technical college, and it is public.

It aligns the incentives of employers and students with those of the system, because they are not paid based on contact hours or seat time, they are paid a commission on the returned value that their alumni generate for the state. In other words, student success is their success. This causes them to be aligned with the needs of their community. This causes them to be aligned with the needs of their students. They have eliminated 13 programs since they initiated this funding model, which were not serving the needs of their community or their students.

We need to encourage employers to engage in sector-driven earn-and-learn programs. One of them is the FAME program that you will hear more about in just a moment. It has chapters in 14 states. One study showed that FAME graduates were earning nearly \$98,000 a year compared to roughly \$52,000 for non-FAME participants after 5 years.

More industries could adopt this approach. We need to give more high school students a chance to engage in work-based learning, while they are still in high school, meaningful paid work-based learning. We have many examples of this working in different sectors.

In short, we need to rethink the way we are doing vocational and higher education, and we need to focus more on the outcomes for students and not on the inputs for systems.

Thank you.

Mr. FALLON. Thank you.

Dr. Sacks.

STATEMENT OF DR. CASEY K. SACKS
PRESIDENT
BRIDGEVALLEY COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Ms. SACKS. Chairman Fallon, Ranking Member Bush, and other Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to address you today on the topic of strengthening workforce development through innovative education models and financial accountability.

I am Casey Sacks, the President of BridgeValley Community and Technical College in West Virginia. I have previously served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Community Colleges at the United States Department of Education, as the Vice Chancellor for the West Virginia Community and Technical College System, and in various roles with the Colorado Community College System. In all of my work, I have focused on community college excellence and workforce development. My passion is connecting people to work.

With my background in education and workforce development, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative power of innovative education models. Today I am going to highlight four key strategies that can help America have a more prepared workforce.

First, community colleges. They anchor their local job markets and deliver 2-year degrees and short-term credentials. Their unique positioning communities allows for a strong understanding of employment. By aligning educational programs closely with local demands, community colleges produce graduates with skills that are tailored to their regional workforce, ensuring a seamless transition from education to employment. Their emphasis on practical skill development and hands-on training empowers graduates, making them ready to meet the demands of the local job landscape.

Second, innovative work-based learning programs can integrate academic learning with real-world experience. Students study at community colleges while at the same time they receive mentoring and hands-on training with future employers. In West Virginia, a program aptly called Learn and Earn places students in programs where they can earn money working in their field of study. For example, through the Federation of Advanced Manufacturing Education, or FAME, we work with Toyota, Nucor, and other area manufacturers who hire our students from our advanced manufacturing technology program, and those students work as technicians in the area. They earn, on average, \$88,000 when they graduate with their 2-year degree.

In the Learn and Earn program, businesses are incentivized from the state with a 50/50 salary match, and our economic developers see the program as a unique selling proposition when they recruit companies to our local region.

Another innovation includes charter schools that integrate high school early college education with 2-year college programs. These early colleges offer a promising model to achieve workforce readiness. By providing seamless transitions from secondary to higher education, these schools can bridge the gap between academic learning and practical skills training.

This fall, BridgeValley welcomed our inaugural class of the WIN Academy. It is the workforce initiative. The innovative charter school has been modeled after successful programs in Florida, Ohio,

and North Carolina, and integrates high school education with required nursing courses for an RN degree. Graduates earn both their high school diploma and an associate degree in nursing in just 3 years.

Fourth, community colleges offer affordable education. Implementing financial incentives for programs that have excellent labor market outcomes can help inform decisions about program of study and decrease debt. The West Virginia Invests Grant covers tuition and fees for program areas that align with the state's workforce needs. West Virginia Invests not only reduces financial barriers for students, but also strategically addresses skills gaps in the state. The targeted approach ensures that resources are allocated to support programs that are essential for economic growth in our region.

Community colleges are very affordable, but Congress could take additional steps to improve their value. For example, Congress could allow states to develop actuarial tables that could prevent overborrowing in fields that will not likely lead to jobs with strong wage outcomes.

Partnerships with local businesses can also help students prepare for work more affordably. For example, the aspiring nurse program that BridgeValley has a partnership with WVU Medicine. We provide nursing students with up to \$25,000, in addition to the state grants and scholarships that already cover tuition and fees for their nursing program. The hospital recognized that our students could be a flat tire away from dropping out of school, and they want to prevent that from happening, while meeting their own long-term workforce needs, so they pay students to go to school.

By replicating models like we have at BridgeValley and expanding their scope, communities can create a robust educational infrastructure that aligns with workforce demands, fostering skilled workforce training to fill specific open positions ready to tackle the challenges of the future.

I am honored to share my experiences and strategies with you today, and I am ready to answer any questions you may have.

Mr. FALLON. Thank you.

The Chair now recognizes Mr. Ewing from the free state of Texas.

**STATEMENT OF MR. TONY EWING
PRESIDENT
ADVANCED FIXTURES, INC.**

Mr. EWING. Good afternoon. I want to thank Chairman Pat Fallon and Ranking Member Cori Bush and all the Members of this Committee for this incredible honor to speak to you today.

My name is Tony Ewing. I am President and CEO of Advanced Fixtures, Incorporated. AFI is a manufacturer of retail store fixtures. We work with wood, metal, glass, acrylic, and some electrical components. I am also managing partner of EdgeTec. EdgeTec sells new and used tow trucks. We attach tow truck bodies to a truck's chassis. This requires welders and technicians with electrical and hydraulic experience.

I am extremely fortunate that I had a grandfather who spent time with me on weekends. He worked in the maintenance department of LTV, a large defense contractor. He taught me the basics

of all the trades. At the time I did not realize it, but he was teaching me skills that I would continue to use the rest of my life.

I was lucky to be a member of the first graduating class of Sam Houston Junior High School—junior high school—in Irving, Texas. In 1977 standards, it was considered to be a state-of-the-art school: open concept, circular ramps to all the floors, and bright colors on the walls. The industrial arts classrooms were all located in the same hallway leading to the gym. These classrooms had a storefront of glass along the hallway that allowed you to see inside the entire industrial arts area. To this day, I can still picture the woodshop with all the heavy-duty green Powermatic equipment.

Needless to say, it was extremely enticing to me, so I signed up for woodshop. I was surprised when at the end-of-the-year awards ceremony my name was called for the who's who in woodworking.

Sam Houston Junior High helped me find my niche in life. However, in high school, I learned that if I was good enough, I could play any sport for 4 years. But regardless of talent, I was limited to 2 years of industrial arts.

College was not an option when I graduated from high school in 1981, so I accepted my first job offer. I was fortunate to work for a supervisor that was more of a mentor than a boss. He taught me the basics of building store fixtures. Over the next 15 months, I started taking classes at North Lake Junior College, quit my job, celebrated my 20th birthday, and started my first company. Three months after starting Ewing Remodeling, I quit junior college and changed the company name to Advanced Fixtures.

I did not have the opportunity for a formal training program. I was blessed by a grandfather that taught me life skills, by Sam Houston Junior High School that placed industrial arts in front of every student every day, by a country that provides endless opportunity, by mentors that have always been there when I needed answers or when I needed a swift kick in the pants, and today with a wife that keeps me grounded.

We cannot go back to the world I grew up in, but I do believe we need to adjust the narrative on how we view education for our children and grandchildren.

Eleven years ago, AFI started recruiting from Pittsburg State University in Pittsburg, Kansas. We have one of the best wood technology programs in the country. Scott Vasey and Chris Bell sitting right here behind me are both proud Gorillas.

From 2011 to 2023, Pitt state had from 8 to 17 graduating seniors in their wood tech program. On average, that is 14 graduating seniors per year. Their spring company day event attracts from 22 to 31 companies. That is 25 companies, on average, trying to attract 14 graduates. Most of these companies would hire more than one graduate, and more companies would attend if there were more students. I am confident Pittsburg State could increase the size of their program by 400 percent, and students would still have multiple job offers.

In 2016, AFI started hosting high school juniors and seniors and their parents at our facility in Farmersville, Texas. The purpose of the event was to attract more students to Pitt State and ultimately back to AFI. All of these students were in a local wood tech program. The first 2 years of the event were somewhat frustrating be-

cause 95 percent of the parents would not engage. The third year we changed things up. We separated the students from their parents. The students toured the facility, and I invited the parents to my conference room to discuss the opportunities in our industry.

After that meeting, it was clear that a large majority of the parents were there because their child asked them to attend. They showed little to no interest in their child working in the trades. There was a clear lack of understanding of the potential opportunity for their child.

We have to change the narrative in our country if we want every American student to have the opportunity to live the American Dream.

Four-year college is clearly not for everyone. I do not have a degree. Yet for all the reasons I listed, I have had the honor to lead a successful and growing company for over 40 years, influenced hundreds of employees and contributed to their livelihoods. We need to incentivize local school districts to help students find their God-given talents. Then we have to train them, so they have confidence to be productive citizens.

I am by no means an expert on what Germany is doing today, but it is clear that their education system regarding the trades seems far superior to ours. Just a few stats on that. About 51 percent of Germany's workers are skilled workers trained in their vocational program. A further 11 percent of workers are master craftsmen. Germany's vocational schools partner with around 430,000 companies, and more than 80 percent of large companies hire apprentices.

I would wrap this up by saying that I know a few of these people that have gone through the program, and it started in ninth grade, and they were given a path and given a direction. And I know how I was in ninth grade. I did not know where, what I wanted to do. But the schools were set up to send them on a path either to university or vocational training. I think by the time they get to high school, it is almost too late, or out of high school.

I want to thank you for allowing me to speak to you today. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Mr. FALLON. Thank you, Mr. Ewing.

The Chair now recognizes Ms. Gladney for her opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF MS. APRYLE GLADNEY
ASSOCIATE VICE CHANCELLOR FOR
H.R. RECRUITMENT & EMPLOYEE RELATIONS
WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS**

Ms. GLADNEY. Good afternoon, Chairman Fallon, Ranking Member Bush, and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me to appear and share the work of the Medical Apprenticeship program at Washington University in St. Louis.

I am Apryle Gladney, the Associate Vice Chancellor for Human Resources at the university.

WashU is a private, nonprofit research-intensive university with a mission to act in service of truth through the formation of leaders, discovery of knowledge, and the treatment of patients, for the betterment of our region, our Nation, and our world.

The inception of our Medical Apprenticeship program at WashU came out of pure need from the School of Medicine and its interest in accomplishing dual priorities: First, to provide means to fill critical patient care openings, specifically those who would actually assist patients in their office visits. And second, to create an end road for underserved and underemployed segments of the St. Louis community by offering a nontraditional pathway into a career in healthcare.

Many think of WashU School of Medicine and instantly think of high-level faculty as well as high-level healthcare roles, such as physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners, and the like. But our aim with this program was to increase awareness of the wide spectrum of roles that are equally as vital to ensure patients have a quality experience in our ambulatory and outpatient clinic setting. Registered medical assistants represents one of those roles.

Our program was registered by the U.S. Department of Labor in May 2018, and its first cohort began several months later in October, and has been led by Mrs. Kathy Clark, who is our Director of the Medical Apprenticeship program, who joins me here today.

Apprentices in our program can either be new hires from the community or incumbent workers looking to transition into a career within healthcare. Our program requirements are simple: You must have a high school diploma or a GED with a preference of prior customer service or clinical experience. There is no specific degree requirement for those who want to participate in the program or for the subsequent role as a medical assistant. We simply ask that medical assistants be registered and complete basic life-support training.

Our apprentices are hired by WashU as regular full-time, benefits-eligible employees from day one. This is an aspect that helps to set us apart in our program from more traditional historic apprenticeships. We offer competitive starting salary, as well as immediate access for individuals to enroll in a full array of employee benefits, to include health, dental, retirement savings, et cetera.

Our program is a yearlong program that is separated into two phases. First, the first 3 months are designed so apprentices are able to get hands-on training in the clinic setting, 36 hours a week, with 4 hours per week being in an in-classroom facilitated training session where they are able to get help and assistance so that they complete the credentialing exam at the end of the 3-month timeframe.

The second phase is month 4 through 12, and it is focused on support and direct mentorship of our newly created and credentialed employees. The program hosts individual and group sessions that help with skill refinement and development as well as professional development.

We intentionally keep the program classes small, normally between 4 to 10 people, so that we can foster that one-on-one mentorship opportunity.

The success of our program is one that we remain very proud of. Our outreach efforts for the program include both traditional and creative connections to find suitable participants, from holding on-site job fairs to participating in virtual and in-person career fairs, even to participating in different community events.

We also coordinate a lot of hiring forums in concert with other large employers within the St. Louis area. We created a network with member institutions in St. Louis called the St. Louis Anchor Action Network, with the specific goal of focusing on representative communities that have suffered from decades of disinvestment.

We continue to be proud of our program's success. As of September 2023, the WashU Medical Apprenticeship program has enrolled 292 apprentices with 170 graduates. We currently have 73 that are within their first year, and 49, unfortunately, who are not able to complete that program. Our average program participant is a single parent who has not only the responsibility of supporting their own children, but a lot of cases family members that live in their household.

We are confident that our program model is making a great impact on the St. Louis area and for WashU School of Medicine, not just in hiring, but also in helping with the community.

From a personal perspective, I can attribute my own career progression to several nontraditional ways and experiences that allowed me to seek other opportunities that I did not feel, whether it was in research, whether it was in corporate, or in healthcare, that were instantly available to me. This is one of the main focuses and goals for our apprenticeship program.

In conclusion, we enthusiastically support the government in its efforts to ensure Americans continue to have access to nontraditional pathways for careers. WashU fully supports all efforts to increase and diversify funding for the continued growth and development of apprenticeship program. I am happy and available to answer any questions.

Thank you very much.

Mr. FALLON. Thank you.

The Chair now recognizes Ranking Member Bush for her 5 minutes of questions.

Ms. BUSH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

This hearing provides an opportunity for me to highlight an economic opportunity success story in my hometown, which you just heard about, in St. Louis. But before I get into that, I just want to say, all of these programs being able to change the trajectory of someone's life, it changes not only that individual, but it changes their family, it changes their community, which means it changes our country. And I just want to say just thank you for the work that all of you are doing.

But now I am going to talk about Washington University in St. Louis, affectionately known as WashU, is located in my district. WashU provides a world-class education to its students, particularly its teaching hospital. Barnes-Jewish Christian Hospital at Washington University Medical Center, a place where I have been myself multiple times, is the largest hospital in Missouri and the largest private employer in the St. Louis region.

In 2018, the university launched a medical apprenticeship program, offering training and opportunities to unemployed and underemployed members of the local community.

Ms. Gladney, what prompted the Washington University Hospital System to start this Medical Apprenticeship program?

Ms. GLADNEY. Thank you for the question. It truly came out of need. We had a number of openings at the time, were having a hard time creating a pipeline where there were individuals who even thought of WashU as a place for this level of position. As I mentioned in my statement, a lot of people think of higher-level titles and attribute that to WashU, not recognizing.

So as we decided that there were a number of needs that we wanted to kind of grow our own and attempted to walk down the path of how can we do that, how can we find individuals who might be under skilled, might be unemployed, might be underemployed, and give them an opportunity to have access to not only us as an employer, but all the rich benefits that we have to offer, including the tuition assistance. So, it truly came out of those two needs.

Ms. BUSH. And as a nurse who has worked in the hospital and in clinics—medical assistants, if we just talk about medical assistants, they are so needed, and they do not get enough credit. And so, thank you for filling a need in our community and for diversifying the healthcare workforce.

Let me also ask you, since the program was established in 2018, is WashU able to fill its openings for medical assistance?

Ms. GLADNEY. We are able to fill, but the need based on the growth of the campus and within the region, the needs continue to grow. So even as of today, I have just short of a hundred of these positions available. So—

Ms. BUSH. Oh.

Ms. GLADNEY [continuing]. The growth in the program has clearly helped. If I could expand the program, which is something that Ms. Clark and I have been discussing, that would be wonderful, but there are still needs that are outpacing the progression within the program. So there continue to be needs based on the growth of the medical school and their clinical enterprise.

Ms. BUSH. Thank you.

I am absolutely encouraged by these efforts. Healthcare we know is a critical industry, and hospitals everywhere struggle to find the trained staff that is needed to give quality care to all of our patients. Washington University saw a need, just as all of you, all of our other witnesses, WashU built the infrastructure to fill those gaps.

Ms. Gladney, how much do these programs cost the students, and is there an education requirement?

Ms. GLADNEY. So, the program is no cost to the participants. We rely heavily on our community partners who have backing from Federal, state, and local, you know, funding sources to allow us to afford this opportunity at no cost. So, they start, they are making a wage, they have benefits. We have funding that helps to cover the programmatic costs. And also, we partner with those same institutions to help provide for some of the other things that might be considered hindrances or barriers for our students. So, if there are family care needs and getting access to affordable, whether that is childcare or elder care, transportation needs, in addition to providing a laptop, providing—you know, proctoring the exam, paying for the exam, so there is no cost to the individuals.

Ms. BUSH. Thank you very much. And I will yield back there.

Mr. FALLON. Thank you.

So, votes were just called. So, what we are going to do, Members, is go ahead and we are going to recess, and then we are going to—it is just the one vote, so just go over and vote and come on right back. So maybe try to reconvene in, is it fair to say, do you want to say 20 minutes? Twenty minutes? OK.

So pursuant to the previous order, the Chair declares the Committee in recess, subject to the call of the Chair.

The Committee stands in recess.

[Recess.]

Mr. FALLON. The Subcommittee on Economic Growth, Energy, and Regulatory Affairs is now back in session. Yes, it is in session.

Welcome, and thank you. Again, just an historic day and our schedules got moved around. I want to thank the witnesses as well for being so accommodating. You were supposed to be here at 2, and then we moved it to 4 with less than 24 hours' notice. So, thank you very much for that.

I would now recognize myself for the purpose of asking questions.

Mr. Ewing, in your humble opinion, would you describe your journey over the last 40 years as the American Dream?

Mr. EWING. Yes.

Mr. FALLON. And you said early in your testimony that your grandfather had taught you some basic trade skills, and you also took wood shop in high school—or junior high?

Mr. EWING. Junior high and high school.

Mr. FALLON. When you started your company at 20 years of age, 20 years old, if I heard you correctly—

Mr. EWING. Yes.

Mr. FALLON [continuing]. What kind of capital did you have? Because that is what we hear a lot of folks say. You know, I understand it is a difficult journey. I took it myself. I took it later when I had a couple dollars in my pocket, not many, but a few. How did you do that?

Mr. EWING. Well, I had \$500, and I went to the bank—

Mr. FALLON. And what year was this?

Mr. EWING. This was in 1981.

Mr. FALLON. So, you had saved up \$500, and you started your own business?

Mr. EWING. Right.

Mr. FALLON. And then what? Just Reader's Digest, because we only have 5 minutes. And then what happened?

Mr. EWING. I borrowed \$5,000 from the bank, which today you could not do. But, fortunately, my grandfather convinced me to start my credit up when I was 16, and I bought a car and did that. And so, I had, you know, 4 years' of credit history, and that allowed me to get the \$5,000. And I bought equipment.

Mr. FALLON. Fair to say if you did not have that guidance and mentorship from people that loved you, you probably would not be sitting right here answering these questions about being successful?

Mr. EWING. I think that is very fair to say.

Mr. FALLON. Yes. OK.

Mr. EWING. Because it gave me a good start.

Mr. FALLON. How do you think the industrial arts have changed since you were in high school?

Mr. EWING. Well, I mean, they are pretty nonexistent. I mean, when I was in Irving, Texas, every junior high and every high school had industrial arts. Every one.

Mr. FALLON. Yes. What challenges do you think you are experiencing now attracting high school kids to your business? I mean, so do you right now have—you have a company of about 150 people. Do you have all the labor that you need?

Mr. EWING. No. The office talent and sales, project managers, accounting, we have no challenges there. Our challenge is in production.

Mr. FALLON. If a labor angel came down right now and gave you really highly qualified folks, how many could you literally hire right now, do you think?

Mr. EWING. Thirty.

Mr. FALLON. In your company of 150, so 20—you could increase your workforce right now 20 percent?

Mr. EWING. We could—right, yes.

Mr. FALLON. Wow. Well, I mean, again, I think we have all heard it, when people come into our offices, everybody is starving for labor and particularly skilled labor.

What do you think we could do—what is your company doing to create interest? Because you touched on that in your testimony.

Mr. EWING. We are working with several school districts that have industrial arts programs. One of them is in Lewisville, Texas. It is called Dale Jackson. It is a separate school. And I believe the fact that it is separate, students just are not really aware of it. I mean, in junior high, I walked by the industrial arts classes every day when I went to the gym. It was in front of me, so it was an option. Today it is not.

And the thing is that the students that do find it, it is now—it is an extra battle to try to get parents to understand that there is an incredible opportunity, because we are not just a wood shop. I mean, we have millions of dollars of very high-tech CNC equipment, and it is not like the little wood shop. But these guys behind me, they know the basics of wood, which you need to know because that is part of it.

Mr. FALLON. Somebody working with wood like that, skilled laborer that has been working for 10 years, what are you paying them?

Mr. EWING. Skilled?

Mr. FALLON. Uh-huh.

Mr. EWING. If they are skilled and they have the talent to do what we need to do, they are making from \$25 to \$28 an hour, plus benefits.

Mr. FALLON. Is that to start or a year in or—

Mr. EWING. Well, if they have experience—I mean, we hired an experienced painter at \$28 an hour, what, I think probably a year ago.

Mr. FALLON. OK.

Dr. Winfree, can we touch on—because we talked about it a little bit earlier, and I mentioned it, about the stigma that we seem to have in the United States with, oh, if you do not have a 4-year degree and, oh, you are just—because words matter, right—you are

just a tradesman or a tradeswoman of some sort. What does Germany do differently?

Mr. WINFREE. Well, one of the things that other countries do is that they integrate their vocational education in the normal academic tracks, right. So, you are not separating students coming out of middle school. You are putting them all under the same school. They do not have to choose to, you know, go to a school without their friends. They can be right there. And if they get halfway through high school and they are on the academic track or they are on the vocational track, they can choose a different track halfway through high school. And that is really important.

It is really important to reducing the stigma, and it is also important to providing options to those high school students while they are in high school still making decisions about, you know, what they want to do with the rest of their lives. I mean, I sure as heck did not know what I wanted to do at 16 or 18 or maybe even 25. That is why I have a Ph.D.

Mr. FALLON. I think a lot of us up here do not know what we want to do.

Mr. WINFREE. But, you know, that is so critical to these models that have been tried in other countries that we, honestly, should learn from. And that used to be the way that things were done in the United States. I mean, I think as Tony mentioned earlier, you know, half of all high school students in the 70's were on a vocational track most of the time at a typical high school.

Mr. FALLON. Wow. My time has expired, but thank you very much. I mean, I could literally sit up here and ask you all questions for the entire day. We would get some beers and we would just chat, and we would get learned and we would get smarter.

The Chair now recognizes Ms. Stansbury for her 5 minutes of questions.

Ms. STANSBURY. All right. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. And welcome to all of our witnesses today.

I am actually very excited to be talking about apprenticeships and trades education because I am a former tradesperson. I actually grew up in a landscaping family, so I grew up with blisters on my hands, digging ditches and laying irrigation pipe. And, like you, Mr. Ewing, I grew up with a father figure in my life who taught me the blessings of a long day's work and getting dirty and coming home and feeling proud of the work that you did.

I am also a former trades student. Twenty-one years ago, I went to the Albuquerque Technical Vocational Institute, which has since rebranded itself as the Central New Mexico Community College, which I think is part of the discussion here today. But I am excited to talk about these issues.

I grew up in a trades family, as I just mentioned. Not only did my sister's dad help raise me in the landscaping business, my mother who is a seamstress was also an operating engineer. She worked on heavy equipment at a power plant, and my dad was a boilermaker. He was a welder and a diesel mechanic. And so, I grew up with a really strong background and appreciation for a hard day's work.

And I also really appreciate the importance of trades education, because it is not only the opportunity for making an honest living

doing something that feels very satisfying, as we have been talking today, it is really crucial to our economy.

Right now, in New Mexico we have more jobs than people, and I think some of the discussion has really pointed to that. And that is across every sector. That is healthcare. That is our trades, our building trades. That is, you know, commercial, retail, you name it. There truly is more jobs than there are humans.

And I think that part of the challenge that we face is to figure out how to incentivize more of our young people to go into the specific areas that are matched with where our economy can grow. And so, I think that is where you all in particular play a special role.

So, one of the things that New Mexico has done—and I think this goes along with some of the comments that were made about other countries—is that we made college free for all. Literally, if you are a resident of the state of New Mexico, you can now go and attend the Central New Mexico Community College and get a trades certificate. You can do an apprenticeship program, you can get a 2-year degree, a 4-year degree, and it is completely subsidized by the state. When I went to TVI 21 years ago, it was \$30 a semester. It is now free.

And what we have seen as a result of putting that state policy into practice that was championed by our state legislature and our Governor is that we are one of the only states in the United States where college and 2-year and trade school enrollment is going up across every institution in the state.

So, it is not only good for education and good for our communities, it is also good for our institutions of higher education and training as well. And we have some of the finest in the country, as I know some of you come from.

We have also been taking advantage of many of the huge incentive packages that have come our way because of the work that this body did in partnership with the President last Congress.

So, you know, last Congress we passed the CHIPS and Science Act, which unlocked billions of dollars in investments in domestic manufacturing. New Mexico right now is massively expanding microchip manufacturing through Intel. We have a huge wind and solar manufacturing enterprise that is just booming right now in our state because of the Inflation Reduction Act and the incentives in that. And because of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law that we passed last Congress, we have more construction projects that are shovel ready than we can find construction workers to actually do that work.

So, we are really investing in the fundamentals to transform our economy. But the problem is, is that we do not have enough trained workers and folks who really want to work in these industries. And so, you know, I am excited to hear about some of the programs here today.

And, Chancellor Gladney, I was particularly interested—you know, New Mexico also has a severe healthcare worker shortage. And the apprenticeship program that you talked about at Washington University, tell us, how does WashU finance that? How did you create it and afford to bring these apprenticeships into the college?

Ms. GLADNEY. Thank you for the question. We actually rely on funding that is connected to our community partners. So, for example, our St. Louis County Workforce Development Office receives funding. We connect with a number of different organizations within the community, and through their support we are able to allow it to be free of cost for our participants.

Ms. STANSBURY. That is amazing. And I think these kinds of public-private partnerships are also some of the things that we really have to be exploring, since it is not just the healthcare industry, but name an industry, biotech. You know, in New Mexico we have a huge aerospace industry. There is a lot of opportunity there to really partner.

But I think there is another element—and we were just going to this talking about getting young people interested. You know, a lot of the young people in my life, the teenagers in my life, they want to be video gamers and work in the creative arts, which is wonderful as well, but how do we get more of our young people interested in those career paths that we need to match with industry.

And so, Dr. Sacks, I was compelled by some of the comments that you made about aligning local needs with the workforce demand and creating pipeline programs. And so, I know we are low on time here, but with your permission, Mr. Chairman, Dr. Sacks, how do you do that in a practical way?

Ms. SACKS. Thank you very much. It is really looking at our local labor market demands and figuring out how do we fill the jobs that exist in the community. West Virginia is small enough that many company CEOs talk to me on a regular basis and are very explicit about what it is that they need. I think New Mexico shares that with us, that it would not be uncommon for you to be able to talk to the CEO of the largest employer in the state. So that is a huge advantage for us in West Virginia, to be able to sit down and have coffee with the person who is hiring the most healthcare workers who can really say, gosh, we need nurses. And all of your states need nurses.

And so, it is not particularly unique to West Virginia, but what is unique for us is that I can look at the Bureau of Labor Statistics and see what the labor market demand is, but then I can also have those relationships and have those conversations where now the CEO of the hospital knows that my students could drop out of school because they get a flat tire. And so, we can start brainstorming, how do we fix that, how do we make sure your needs are being met and we have people who get trained up and can be in your workforce.

And I think that is how we came up with the Aspiring Nurse Program that now the hospital system is paying people to go to school. We share some of the state investment in higher education, but what we found is that students still need access to things like childcare. And so rather than wait for the TANF program to be able to provide childcare the way that students need it or the things that they need—some of that bureaucracy is hard, and keeping students eligible is hard. And so, rather than fight that system, it is much simpler to find a local employer who is willing to step up to the plate and say, we need nurses so badly that we are willing to invest in these students.

Ms. STANSBURY. Thank you.

And I think, Mr. Chairman, it is fair to say that not only do we need to be investing in our trades and apprenticeship programs, there is no telling where your life path can go. You could end up a nurse. You could end up in construction. You could end up as a Congressperson.

Mr. FALLON. I am learning lots of new things about our colleagues. This is wonderful.

The Chair now recognizes my good friend, Mr. Fry, from South Carolina.

Mr. FRY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to our witnesses for being here.

You know, I graduated high school 20 years ago, and it is remarkable to see in that time that the American economy has really undergone quite a lot of changes in the workforce. And so, while I am encouraged by the technological advances that we have, our workforce is still aging. We still do not have enough skilled workers. There are labor shortages that are felt across the country.

I am proud to say that in my home state, when I was in the legislature, we were really—the Governor and the legislature were really in sync at making sure that our technical schools were working with K–12, that they were working with local industries, that they were working with businesses to find ways, as Dr. Sacks talked about, to create a pipeline where people could learn a trade, have an apprenticeship, and develop a skill.

I think by providing incentives like these with the apprenticeship tax credit and establishing programs such as Apprenticeship Carolina, we have lowered those barriers so that people that I grew up with have an opportunity to go to school and learn something.

In my district, Florence-Darlington Technical College provides opportunities for high school students to work toward a nursing degree as a high school student, as a youth apprentice before they ever graduate. Since last year, over 20 companies in Horry County have created 46 unique apprenticeship programs to address specific gaps in the marketplace in the labor market.

By investing in these apprenticeships, individuals can receive valuable training without the burden of student loans. Oftentimes it is free to go. And if it is not free, it is very inexpensive to go to school. Employers can find that skilled talent ready to meet those workforce challenges. It is a win-win.

Dr. Sacks, you were just talking about the Aspiring Nursing Program, so I want to go back to that. What are the funding mechanisms available for students that participate in that program?

Ms. SACKS. You bet. So, students who participate in any program at the community college have the opportunity to take advantage of Federal programs that exist. So that includes the Federal Pell grant, Federal loans. Then we have a number of grants that are available within the state of West Virginia. West Virginia has created a program that is called West Virginia Invests. It created free community college for a number of specific programs that meet local workforce demands, so the State Department of Commerce has selected which programs are eligible for that free tuition. So, it is no cost to the student.

Then students also have a lot of private support that comes in. So, the Aspiring Nurse Program means that the big hospital system in the state, for example, is stepping in and paying students to be students. They can use those dollars on whatever it is that they want.

For the students who are part of the charter school experience, the way that largely gets paid for is the state charter allocation. So, they—it is a public charter school, and students come with an allocation, and that allocation pays their tuition and for books and fees and whatever it is that they need at the institution. So, it is a slightly different funding stream than what we have seen with the more traditional age college students.

Mr. FRY. In that same vein, Doctor, do you think—in what ways could states remodel their funding structures to better accommodate those pre-apprenticeships or stackable apprenticeships?

Ms. SACKS. I mean, it really starts with what their employers want. It should be the foundation of their state WIOA plan. Unfortunately, many of those state plans are grounded in Federal compliance instead of really thinking about how to meet local labor market demands.

Mr. FRY. You also said that the earning potential for students is contingent on the relevance of the skills learned and the demand for such labor in the local market. How are students supported in their job hunt particularly in geographic areas experiencing lower demand for skilled labor?

Ms. SACKS. That is a great question. So, we actually have closed programs where there is not a demand for those skilled laborers, but the ones that we really focus on are programs where we have so many employers jumping up and down, saying, we need manufacturing technicians. There are several manufacturers in our area who will take whoever we produce. I cannot create enough medical laboratory technicians. And so those are high-wage jobs.

I think the other thing that is really important is that colleges should help students make choices so that they—many of my students do not know what a medical laboratory technician is. Many people in this room might not know what that is. And so helping students understand that and understand that this is a job where you are going to make \$60,000 a year is really different from getting them involved in a job that is going to make \$30,000 a year where they are sort of equally knowledgeable or interested in either one of them, that we really want to set our up students up for success, and looking at those labor market outcomes makes a really big difference.

Mr. FRY. Great.

Ms. Valdez, real quick, what steps are Texas taking to improve its outcomes-based approach for students?

Ms. VALDEZ. On the high school side, Texas in 2019 created something called the College, Career, and Military Readiness Bonus, which allowed districts to get a bonus for students who achieved above a certain score on a standard test—it was a college board test—and enrolled in college or scored the same—above the same threshold and got an industry-based credential or certificate. And then there was also a military piece of that where schools would get a bonus for military enlistment.

The program has had some success. There are some issues with the industry certification list. Employers often feel that some of those certifications are not aligned with their actual workforce needs, and so there could be some room for improvement on that.

On the postsecondary side, we see an enormous, I think, national model that we could look at. It is called the Texas State Technical College System. And the reason the system works is because it is paid based on the wage outcomes of students. It is not—there is no guesswork or expert opinion on what we think we are going to need in 5 years and hope for the best. It is actually grounded in that data. And so, as a result, they are laser-focused on the needs of the employers and their communities.

Mr. FRY. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. FALLON. Thank you.

The Chair now recognizes our host, Ms. Norton.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I appreciate this hearing.

Throughout my service in Congress, I have fought to make certain my constituents can access the opportunities they need to build the futures they want. That means access to higher education without fear of crippling debt. That can also mean access to apprenticeships that teach them the skills and craftsmanship needed to earn well-paid careers.

Apprenticeships provide on-the-job learning and experiences that prepare students for well-paying careers. Apprenticeships are great options for many early career individuals or mid-career people seeking a change.

Despite the benefits of a quality apprenticeship, however, individuals with bachelor's degrees still typically outearn people who do not have a bachelor's degree. Bachelor's degrees, regardless of major or minor, seem to open doors to career opportunities still inaccessible through apprenticeships.

The problem is that too many of my constituents and too many people around the Nation do not really have a real choice to pursue a bachelor's degree. They do not have a counselor or role model who can help them navigate the college application process. They cannot afford to take on student debt or take time away from full-time work while supporting a family.

To be clear, not everyone needs to go to a 4-year college, but everyone should have the opportunity to make the educational choices best suited to help them achieve their desired careers. Congress must attack inequities from all angles, including expanding need-based grants.

So, Dr. Sacks, how can starting college at a 2-year community college and then transferring to a 4-year program lower tuition costs and improve access to undergraduate degrees?

Ms. SACKS. Thank you. One of the pillars of community colleges is to provide transfer opportunities—

Ms. NORTON. Is your microphone on?

Ms. SACKS. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. NORTON. OK.

Ms. SACKS. One of the things that community colleges work on is providing transfer opportunities to students, so going from a 2-

year degree to a 4-year degree. The students who transfer the most seamlessly know what it is they are transferring for. So, if you come in as a community college student and complete an associate's degree in a general field, you do not have those same labor market returns that you are talking about.

And then the students who go on and do bachelor's degrees where they still do not have a clear path or a clear program of study, we are missing those labor market returns. The best returns we see are in great programs, engineering programs, math programs, things that we know lead to jobs that exist in our communities.

So, I think some of the career guidance that you are asking about is to help students to transfer but to help them to transfer with a purpose so that they are thinking about employment. They are not transferring just so that they can check a box and complete a bachelor's degree. If they are transferring, they are transferring because they recognize that there is a job that they want that is requiring that bachelor's degree for entry in the labor market.

Ms. NORTON. Ms. Gladney, does completion of Washington University medical assistant apprenticeship program open doors for students who choose to continue their educations and even seek a 4-year degree?

Ms. GLADNEY. Absolutely. Thank you for that question. It does. As a full-time employee of Washington University, after a year of full-time employment, all individuals, including our apprenticeship participants, are able to take advantage of our tuition assistance plan which pays for 100 percent for evening undergraduate course work, 50 percent for graduate level evening course work. And as well, even specific to our apprentices, we have partnered with our campus institution of Goldfarb School of Nursing on the School of Medicine campus to allow them for them to even pursue a BSN.

So, we absolutely encourage them, actually, to continue if they choose to by utilizing that benefit that they have just simply by being an employee of the university.

Ms. NORTON. Dr. Sacks, you have worked on programs that help students transfer credits from community colleges to 4-year programs. Are there specific policies or measures that help students more easily move from community college to bachelor's degree programs?

Ms. SACKS. Yes, ma'am, there are policies that seem to smooth transfer. There are some states that have been very intentional about state transfer policies, and you see better outcomes for students in those states where it is much simpler to move from a community college to a 4-year institution because courses are commonly numbered, for example. It makes it much simpler just in process if I sit down with the registrar at one institution and another, if everybody agrees that this is what English 100 is, that becomes just administratively simpler. And many states have mandated policies like those.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. FALLON. Thank you.

The Chair now recognizes our friend from Ohio, Ms. Brown.

Ms. BROWN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Apprenticeships provide opportunities for our next generation of workers with hands-on experience they need to compete for high-skilled jobs. I have and will continue to be a steadfast advocate of nontraditional educational paths. In fact, my own educational journey has been nontraditional, so I know firsthand the challenges traditional educational journeys can pose as well as the benefits of alternative learning opportunities. Apprenticeships are also an important avenue of transition from minimum wage jobs to high-paying careers of the 21st century economy.

The Biden-Harris Administration and House Democrats have worked hard to create tens of thousands of new high-paying, good-quality jobs by way of legislation like the CHIPS and Science Act. Now these job openings need well-trained workers to fill these climate-friendly high-tech positions.

So, Ms. Gladney, how are apprenticeships a critical tool in preparing our workforce for the modern economy? And how are the Biden-Harris Administration and congressional Democrats leading the way on supporting apprenticeship programs through legislation like the CHIPS and Science Act, the Inflation Reduction Act, and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law?

Ms. GLADNEY. Thank you for the question. I feel like apprenticeships are vital. There are many ways and many doors that it allows individuals who may not feel like they actually can have access to, it gives them that pathway. It gives them that opportunity, exposure to many different forums.

I feel like, as an example for the medical assistant program, there are so many needs that we have all discussed here today from different statistics all across the country and partnering with employers in your specific community to talk with them about. Ours is a simple model. You are a full-time employee, benefits-eligible employee from day one. You are learning and working at the same time. There is nothing that stops, you know, others from replicating that in kind, which helps from a number of different perspectives.

So, it does not negate the fact that there are maybe different individuals who want to pursue their education further. And, again, from our—as our model demonstrates, because they are full-time employees, they are able to do so at whatever point they choose to, whether it is still in the healthcare profession or in any other career path if they choose to.

Ms. BROWN. Thank you for that.

And, Ms. Gladney, what are some of the barriers that Black and Brown students face in the traditional education system, and how can apprenticeship programs help to bridge that gap?

Ms. GLADNEY. So, I would want to refer to my esteemed colleagues on the admissions side to really talk from a student admission perspective. I can talk about the barriers, though, specifically related to employment.

There are many barriers that individuals face, whether it is, and we have mentioned today, childcare, family care. Since the pandemic, we have larger units now that individuals are responsible for. And how do you find affordable assistance to really help?

If there is transportation issues, for example, at the university we offer a metro transit pass free of charge for every employee as

a way to get around the campus parking rates, as well as to help ensure that they have viable means of transportation to and from based on that system.

So, I do feel like, from an employment perspective, there are a number of challenges that we cannot ignore, and that is why our program not only wants to help upskill individuals, help them receive that credentialing and that certification, but also with our connections to various partners in our community we are able to help address some of the things that hinder people from either accepting entrance into the program or continuing in the program.

Ms. BROWN. Thank you.

And last, Ms. Gladney, how does Federal funding support apprenticeship opportunities, and how might proposed Republican cuts to this funding affect our economic future?

Ms. GLADNEY. Our program would not exist, in my opinion, without the benefits that we are able to receive from the various partners that we connect with in our community. We do not, as of yet, receive specific funding, but it is through those different organizations that we are able to host. It is helping us even to move forward with expanding our model to include other, you know, job titles that are equally as critical to our infrastructure and our mission. So, you know, Basic Research Laboratory is a new program, apprenticeship program that we are launching, clinical research professional, as well as others.

And it would be detrimental, in my opinion, if that funding is not available for us to continue to expand. The labor market, you know, dictates the needs, and we have seen this as a wonderful pipeline where we can help both not only our institution but the community.

Ms. BROWN. Thank you for that.

And I see my time has expired. So, with that, I will yield back.

Mr. FALLON. Thank you very much.

Well, I have got good news. If you want to ask a few more questions, we are going to do a quick second round.

So, I recognize myself for an additional 5 minutes.

Mr. Ewing, how many Pittsburg State graduates have you hired since learning about the school?

Mr. EWING. Nine.

Mr. FALLON. And how many of them are still with you?

Mr. EWING. Three.

Mr. FALLON. Three of them. Where did the other six go?

Mr. EWING. Well, different—we had two that changed industries. One of them decided to be a firefighter. I mean, they were young, and so they just decided they did not want to stay in the industry. We had one that wanted to work in a smaller environment, a smaller shop. There is a lot of woodshops in our country that are 4 to 12 people, and he wanted that more custom environment. Ours is more automated.

Mr. FALLON. Why do you think Pittsburg State has so few wood tech students?

Mr. EWING. There is just no pipeline. There is no pipelines to students. They are doing everything they can. And I think there is 13 states that they offer in-state tuition to just to try to get the stu-

dents there. But that is why we started working with local high schools—or the local school districts to try to get students there.

The other issue is that, you know, most students go back home. My daughter just got married 2 weeks ago, and she moved to Arkansas away from us. And my wife and I already talked about how do we get her back home.

So, I think that what we are doing is, with that information, we are trying to get local students to go up to Pitt State, and then there is more of a chance that they could come back and they will be with their families.

Mr. FALLON. Talk to me about the financial assistance. Does your company offer any kind of incentive or does Pittsburg State?

Mr. EWING. What Advanced Fixtures does is that we hire at least three interns a summer. It is hard. It is hard to get them because they are sought after. And then if we hire an intern, we will offer a little bit of a small stipend, I guess, because hopefully if we—we like to get them back, so we help a little bit there. I think there are some other programs, though. The WMIA scholarships, Woodworking Machinery Industry Association, 9 of the 17 applicants in the country went to Pitt State. There were only 17.

Mr. FALLON. Wow. Wow.

Dr. Sacks, BridgeValley Community and Technical College in your state continues to be a leader in STEM education and training for the area and has numerous success stories, especially within its nursing program. Can you explain how you identify needs within the community and tailored programs that are offered that meet those needs?

Ms. SACKS. Certainly. A lot of this is employer driven, that we talk to our employers regularly. All of our programs have employers who are very involved. Many of our employers provide employees who are teaching as adjuncts in our programs. So, there is very tight synergy there. And when we are identifying programs and need in the community, we are looking at labor market data, and we are looking at outcomes for students.

We are particularly proud of our outcomes in things like advanced manufacturing technology where the average wage for students who graduate from that program is \$88,000. That is a great wage.

Mr. FALLON. Oh. So, how old are these folks when they—

Ms. SACKS. Between 18 and 40.

Mr. FALLON. So, they are all over the gamut for young adults, but they hit the job market making almost \$90,000?

Ms. SACKS. They do. And that is a great wage, and it is something we are really proud of. And so, it is been one of those program areas where we are, in particular, trying to target more women because we see men gravitate toward some of those manufacturing fields, and so really identify that as an opportunity of growth for us, and so it has been something we are working on. But we identify that as an opportunity of growth by looking at our data that we can see that—how do we get more men into nursing? Well, we know that that is an area that we need to target because we have looked at who is enrolled in our nursing program, and we see stark differences that largely women enroll in our nursing pro-

gram. And so, we have made some incredible strides and are now trying to do the same thing in manufacturing.

Mr. FALLON. And real quick with the remaining time we have, what kind of challenges are you facing when you are trying to innovate and have new programs for in-demand fields?

Ms. SACKS. We try very hard to start with the employer and start with the job in mind. That makes a huge difference for making sure our students become employed. And one of the things we have started finding with our employers is, as they talk about getting women into manufacturing, for example, some of the shifts that they ask students to work or their employees to work are not conducive for single moms. A lot of our students are single moms. And so, it is not changing the college environment as much as it is changing the workforce environment so that it becomes more responsive to what employees actually want in their workplace.

Mr. FALLON. Thank you.

My time is up, and I am going to recognize Ms. Stansbury of New Mexico.

Ms. STANSBURY. All right. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think with my remaining time I would like to do a lightning round. I think this is actually one of the more interesting hearings we have had in this Committee in terms of bringing us ideas that are actionable and that we can actually help share ideas and possibly work on legislation or budget initiatives.

So, I wonder if we could just go down the line and maybe taking a minute each, starting with our chancellor here on the end, Ms. Gladney, what recommendations do you have for us in Congress in terms of supporting institutions like yours, in terms of programs, funding, things we can do, using our bully pulpit to lift up programs, to support you as community partners?

Whatever those things look like, I would love to hear from each of you. So, if you do not mind, we will start there.

Ms. GLADNEY. Thank you for the question. Increasing the funding and diversifying the areas so that we as an employer are able to use them. Like I said, the program would not even exist today if—the need was there, of course, but it would not exist if we did not have those community partners with the grant funding from the Federal, state, and local levels. So certainly, to increase that to allow us that flexibility to continue to offer that, in addition to other opportunities.

Ms. STANSBURY. Thank you.

Mr. Ewing.

Mr. EWING. What I would say is that incentivize local school districts to focus more on industrial arts, more like they did years ago. I think that creates an opportunity and gives students a chance to get into a field that they have a natural gift for. And then I would also say that then work locally based on need in that area to support colleges, to create programs so those students could succeed.

Ms. STANSBURY. Absolutely. I still remember my middle school shop teacher who had a huge impact on my life.

Dr. Sacks.

Ms. SACKS. I would ask Congress to block grant as many things as you can to states. Let us decide how we want to address our workforce needs. The less bureaucracy truly the better. WIOA pays

for short-term programs right now. It provides ITAs to learners, but it needs—right now what you hear a lot of is, gosh, we need short-term Pell. That would really help students who want to be in short-term programs. ITA has paid for what essentially short-term Pell would be, but it is a lot more burdensome. So, as you think about how do you get this money to a person who needs money to pay for training, it is much harder to negotiate that work for a system than it is to fill out a FAFSA.

And so, recognizing that the end users of all of these things that Congress has created are negotiating SNAP and TANF and Pell and Department of Labor and USDA, and trying to figure out all of the rules for various Federal programs can be really hard. I mean, it is 20 years in, and I am not an expert about all of them. And I think my colleagues would share that with me, that the more simplicity we can get in our states, truly the easier to serve the people who we are trying to serve.

Ms. STANSBURY. Absolutely.

Ms. Valdez.

Ms. VALDEZ. Thank you for the question. I would echo much of what Dr. Sacks has said here. A couple of practical examples of what she is talking about. When looking at WIOA, it is important to note that those funds go to workforce regions or areas in states. That can complicate delivery of services significantly. When we think about the needs that folks have when they are looking to reskill and upskill, it is often things like childcare, right. It is things that are kind of in the package of things covered, but maybe people have to take more than one stop to find those things, and that is not the intent of that legislation. And so, I would echo and say simplify.

We can look at what Utah has done. They have a waiver, so they have a single statewide delivery service, and because of that, they are able to allocate funds where they are needed. They have a one-stop model for these services. That is, I think, an area where there could be a lot of bipartisan consensus, because it does reduce waste, but it also gets the end—the end user is in mind, as you said, and it gets the funds to those people and helps them get off of the social services programs that we know might bog them down. So—

Ms. STANSBURY. We will definitely look at that.

Dr. WINFREE.

Mr. WINFREE. Thanks so much for the question. One of the themes that has, I think, you know, shined in all of our comments today is that educational innovation works. The problem is that it is not the standard. These are outliers. And so, the question for us is, how do we start to pull those outliers into the standard?

One of our just general challenges that we have with secondary education right now in the United States is, as that college wage premium has increased since the 1970's, as Representative Norton highlighted earlier, high schools have shifted from technical and vocational education to preparing everybody for a 4-year degree, whether or not that makes sense for them, whether or not that is what they want to do. Everyone is learning how to take the SATs, right, regardless of where they are.

And so, what we should be doing is thinking about how to take these innovative models that are being tried in the states, that are being tried in other countries, and make that the standard for what we are doing in the United States. And to come back to my testimony, one of the key pieces of that is going to involve reducing the stigma of vocational education and apprenticeships, right. It should not just be an outlier, but this is the path to a good job that can support your family for your entire career.

So, thanks so much for the great question. And, I mean, I am personally inspired by this panel. Thanks so much.

Ms. STANSBURY. Absolutely. Well, me as well.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. FALLON. Well, I want to thank everybody for coming, and I want to thank my colleagues as well.

In closing, what you just said, Dr. Winfree, about not everyone is going to get a 4-year degree, and some paths differ and success comes in, and I think, I always thought, in all shapes, sizes, and shades, but there is also different paths to success as well. And we can go all day long on the anecdotes that I am sure you know and I know of people that—well, heck, I have got a Member of Congress sitting right next to me that started in the trades. And, again, as I admitted, I took sewing class in seventh grade, you know, and here I am as well.

But I want to thank Mr. Ewing for coming because I think you are a case in point to, you had a family that loved you. They taught you at an early age how to do some handy things, and you turned that into a wildly successful company, and you have American manufacturing jobs, which I love. And I used to, as you know, represent Farmersville when I was in the Texas senate. And, I mean, you are a backbone of that town.

And I just want to say I think we all want to see more examples of that, and I think it is incumbent upon state legislators and Members of Congress to talk to the stakeholders—that is why I really wanted you to come and asked you—and educators and experts in the field that are, as we would say from my original state of Massachusetts, wicked smart, you know, and I wanted to thank you for coming.

But we also have to be very careful, when we do spend Federal money, that we have measures in place, that we are not just spending. Spending—sometimes it happens up here, people say, well, we funded this. Yes, but did it do anything? Did it have an impact? I mean, we could spend all day long. We just want to make sure that money is well spent so we can see that taxpayer money getting used. And there certainly—when I was in the state legislature talked about funding, but making sure we have those measures in place. Because a Texas miracle will grind to an immediate halt when you look at the average ages of some of these folks that are skilled, skilled laborers. They are getting older and older. That median age is rising, and that scares me.

And also, across the country, but particularly in Texas, the demographics of the state is changing as well. And we need to make sure that everybody feels—the thing that gets me the most is I do not want people, particularly young men and women, to think that they cannot succeed because America is a country where, you

know, there is a thumb on the scale against them. And it is a very dangerous thing when we talk about that. Because when you are a young kid, if you do not think you are going to succeed, why bother trying because it is so much easier not to.

I was a teenager once, and if not for a loving family, I do not know where I would be. And so, I just want to make sure that we can provide—maybe sometimes these very successful people preach what they practice in some sense.

And also, we have got to change the culture. We really do. And every one of us has that job, and we need to venerate people that have the skill, because they are building our communities, and remove that stigma. But also, look at other states and look at and work with some think tanks and look at best practices, what are states doing, and hang out—you know, because you do not have to invent the wheel. You can invent the wheel and improve it a little bit, or, hey, I like your wheel. I am just going to replicate it.

And what are other countries doing? I hear a codel coming into play here. But to really look at and mirror some of those successes. Germany, again, different culture, but in the German work ethic is that pride that, I work really hard, that kind of thing, although it took 45 minutes for my bags to get out of the airport, so I was a little disappointed in Germany. Finland, however, the bags beat us to the rack area.

But anyhow—but there are some innovations. And then you talk about leveraging technology moving forward, my goodness, we are in an ever-changing world, and we just have to be ready for it.

And I was really looking forward to this hearing. When me and my staff got together when we knew we were going to chair this Subcommittee, and it was one of the first things that we talked about, because it is something that is working toward solutions. On Oversight we fight a lot, back and forth. A spirited exchange of ideas can be very healthy. It can also be a little bit not all that productive. But this was one of those Committee hearings where I really wanted to have our—the better angels of our nature to come, and I think we largely saw that.

So, I want to thank everyone again. And I know the witnesses came from a very long way. We had lots of things that typically do not go on in Congress. You do not typically elect a new Speaker in the middle of a Congress. But I have a couple of shop things I have got to take care of.

I ask unanimous consent to submit these documents and statements into the record: Apprenticeships, Not College, Can Help Reduce Unemployment, by Paul Winfree and Rachel Greszler; Blanket Loan Forgiveness, Loan Subsidies, and Failed Job-Training Programs Are Not the Answer to Worker Shortages and Inflation, by Rachel Greszler and John Schoof; Outcomes-Based Higher Education Funding: A Case Study from Texas, by Erin Davis Valdez and Jorge Borrego; and Innovation in Apprenticeships: More of the Same, by Mason M. Bishop; final report of the Task Force on Apprenticeship Expansion, May 10, 2019; Statement for the Record by the Foundation for Research on Equal Opportunity.

Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. FALLON. In closing, again, I want to thank our panelists for coming and sharing your knowledge. It was fascinating. And,

again, if we were not so darn busy today, I would ask you to do three, four more rounds.

And with that and without objection, all Members will have 5 legislative days within which to submit materials and to submit additional written questions for the witnesses which will be forwarded to the witnesses for their responses.

If there is no further business, without objection, the Subcommittee stands adjourned.

Thank you very much.

[Whereupon, at 6:14 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

