

**Opening Statement of Ranking Member Robert C. "Bobby" Scott (VA-03)**

Full Committee on Education and Workforce Hearing

*"Examining the Policies and Priorities of the Department of Labor"*

Thursday, June 5, 2025 | 10:15 a.m.

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Madam Secretary, it is always good to see a former colleague welcome back to the committee you served on. It was good to talk to you early this week, and I understand you've been in touch with every member of the committee, Democrat and Republican, and that obviously is a good way to start, and we look forward to working with you with that spirit.

Secretary, your charge with the mission of carrying out is and I quote, "to foster, develop, and promote the welfare of wage earners, job seekers, and retirees of the United States. Improve working conditions and advance job opportunities for profitable employment, and ensure work-related benefits and rights."

Today, you are appearing before this Committee to explain the budget and policy priorities as detailed in the Department's Fiscal Year 2026 budget proposal.

The Speaker Emerita, Nancy Pelosi, stated many times, "Show me your budget and I will tell you your values." And that's why the meeting on the budget is so important.

Madam Secretary, your written testimony states that you promised to put American workers first and that you indicated many areas where there may be bipartisan support. For example, the expansion of the Department of Labor's certified registered apprenticeships is one area where I think we have good bipartisan support.

The reauthorization of the *Workforce and Innovation Opportunities Act* (WIOA) is another. We already have a bipartisan, bicameral agreement on reauthorization, which came close to passing last December. I hope we can get that bill back on track, and although it is not in your jurisdiction, Workforce Pell, that is another area of bipartisan support. The Workforce Pell Grants can serve to open opportunities for millions of workers who seek to gain skills that could transform their earning capacity.

Unfortunately, instead of pursuing initiatives with bipartisan support, the Administration has taken many actions that I believe have taken us in the opposite direction: jeopardizing jobs, endangering the rights and protections of workers, and undermining the financial security of retirees.

Specifically, since January 2025, this Administration has:

- Rescinded the landmark executive order in effect for 50 years, protecting federal contract workers and job applicants from discrimination;
- Rescinded an executive order that raised wages for federal contractors;

- Illegally fired the Inspectors General (IG) at the Labor Department (DOL) and several other agencies, who are charged with rooting out waste, fraud, and abuse;
- Delayed enforcement of a rule protecting coal miners from silica exposure; and
- Terminated grants that combat child labor and promote workers' rights.

In other actions, the Administration:

- Fired a member of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), leaving the NLRB without a quorum to function and issue decisions;
- Fired two Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Commissioners, who were in the middle of their terms. This has never happened in the agency's 60-year history, leaving the EEOC without a quorum to address illegal claims of workplace discrimination;
- Stripped the collective bargaining rights of more than one million federal workers; and
- In addition to these concerns, Madam Secretary, we are concerned about what Elon Musk and DOGE have been doing in the Department.

Many weeks ago, I asked you if Musk had access to confidential files or investigations of his businesses, including the name of a potential witness, and whether or not he had access to the Bureau of Labor Statistics information, like job numbers, before they were made public. And now whether he has counting access to that information and we haven't received an answer yet.

We are also concerned about what is going on at the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA). One of the Labor Department's first moves in this Administration was to revoke the provisional job offers of dozens of new MSHA inspectors.

Madam Secretary, I was on this Committee when we investigated the tragedy in Sago and then the tragedy at Upper Big Branch. One of the most important lessons we learned from those tragedies was that we must invest in MSHA's pipeline of talent so that qualified inspectors will be there to ensure safety in these dangerous jobs. We know that the process takes years.

Madam Secretary, in your testimony in other committees, you've had questions about the abrupt closure of all Job Corps Centers across the nation.

Since its inception in 1964, Job Corps has trained over three million young Americans in various trades, including welding, carpentry, medical assistant, and a lot of others. Which you know has bipartisan support in Congress – trains young, low-income people, helps them find good-paying jobs, and provides housing for a population that might otherwise be without a home.

And I agree with your letter you sent to the House Appropriations Committee on May 1, 2024, you argued that “In fact, studies show that Job Corps increases participants' employment and wages and decreases their reliance on public benefits. In the most recently completed program year, nearly 80 percent of Job Corps graduates received a high-quality placement via employment, enlisting in the military, or enrolling in higher education.”

Madam Secretary, I want you to know that we have several students from the Potomac Job Corps Center here in attendance. These students were on their way to getting a good job and earning a living wage. I'd ask the students to stand up for a moment, all of the Job Corps participants.

Thank you, and on behalf of them, Madam Secretary, I urge you to immediately reverse the decision to effectively shut down all Job Corps centers. I understand that a Federal Court has already intervened, and this matter will likely be under litigation for some time.

Madam Secretary, the budget proposes cutting \$4.5 billion in discretionary funding – a 33.1 percent reduction in funding relative to the Fiscal Year 2025 enacted level.

I understand that, during your budget hearing before the Appropriations Subcommittee, you said that “more money does not lead to the best outcome.” Madame Secretary, I am looking forward to hearing from you today about how less money can lead to better outcomes.

For example, how does this budget strengthen the Department’s enforcement of laws to guard against wage theft and exploitative child labor?

How does this affect OSHA? Because OSHA has so few inspectors that it would take 185 years for the agency to visit every workplace within its jurisdiction just once. So, how will workers be safer with the cuts proposed in this budget?

Finally, Madam Secretary, my Democratic colleagues and I have sent you several oversight letters over the past several months. Our office finally received one response that didn’t really respond to the questions. The American people deserve an answer to the questions we have asked you about DOGE, and the Trump Administration’s actions that impact workers. And we expect those responses to be prompt and complete.

I look forward to your answers today and trust that we will receive complete and thorough answers to our questions. In particular, the questions we’ve asked in writing.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.