

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

Full Committee Markup

H.R. 8210, *A Stronger Workforce for America Act of 2026*

2175 Rayburn House Office Building

Tuesday, April 21, 2026 | 10:15 a.m.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, you just mentioned the bipartisan bicameral agreement from last year.

Last Congress, former Chair Virginia Foxx and I worked very hard to find common ground and to negotiate a bipartisan reauthorization of the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA). That bill was reported from this committee on a vote of 44 to 1, and passed the House with overwhelming support, 378 to 26. We then worked with our Senate counterparts and reached a bipartisan, bicameral agreement that was on the verge of becoming law at the end of 2024.

But at the last minute, that agreement was pulled from the end-of-year spending package after it was publicly misrepresented by Elon Musk. Despite that disappointment, it was my hope that we could [get] back together and take that bipartisan foundation to pass this important bill for the American people.

Instead, here we are considering H.R. 8210, the *A Stronger Workforce for America Act of 2026*—a bill that shares the name of that bipartisan effort but not its substance. It is disappointing that the bipartisan framework that was negotiated by Dr. Foxx was not replicated in this bill. Instead of building on that framework, you've chosen to take the name of a bipartisan bill and poison it with a version of a bill that lacks consensus and ensures it will not advance in the Senate or ever become law in its current form.

Under current law, for example, the *Adult Education and Family Literacy Act*—Title II of WIOA—is administered by the Department of Education. That is intentional. These programs help adults build foundational skills, where you can get a job skill, but you also learn reading, writing, math, English proficiency, and earn a GED. These are not just job skills—they are life skills.

So, if your particular job skills become obsolete and you have to seek a new job, your resume contains a GED demonstration, you have mastered basic education.

This current WIOA reauthorization bill would move the *Adult Education and Family Literacy* programs from the Department of Education to the Department of Labor. Where you are likely to learn a job skill only. That is a fundamental shift because adult education is not just about preparing someone for their next job. It is about equipping them for a lifetime of learning and full participation in our democracy. At the Department of Education, the focus is on building that foundation. At the Department of Labor, the focus is necessarily on just the next job.

Both missions matter—but they are not interchangeable. And this is where the broader consensus becomes clear.

Further, H.R. 8210 helps advance the idea of dismantling of the Department of Education and, by doing so, reveals itself as needlessly partisan. Congress should not be taking the first step in codifying the Administration's illegal actions to dismantle the Department. It is also quite revealing that the Administration's own 2027 budget proposal does not provide any funding for the *Adult Education and Family Literacy* programs— not at the Department of Education *nor* the Department of Labor.

Now, Mr. Chairman, how does the Administration expect to implement this program if it proposes to move it from the office it is now administering it and move it to an office that doesn't have any funding to administer it?

And I yield to you briefly if you want to respond to that. [Mr. Walberg responded.] Well, I'll interrupt that to say that the idea will not be any federal funding for Adult Education and Family Literacy was not an oversight. It was intentional.

I am also disappointed that H.R. 8210 seeks to double the number of states that could block grant WIOA's funding and reduce authorized funding by 4 percent.

H.R. 8210 redirects funds from the Employment Service, which connects people receiving unemployment insurance to job openings by providing them with career services and moves these funds to an untested credential program. The new untested program would provide funding to states to develop a new "talent marketplace" in which the state would create a "skills profile generator" and "credential repository" that match a jobseeker's skills to the desired skills of an employer's job opening using Artificial Intelligence (AI). A similar program in Alabama has not yet been fully evaluated, so its impact is not yet known. Further, the use of AI to match skills between a jobseeker and employer has the potential to discriminate against some populations, such as older workers.

Mr. Chairman, the bill before us today represents a missed opportunity to engage in a meaningful law-making effort. I understand that our staff had spoken about ways to bring this bill to fruition, but that effort stalled due to the disagreements about how to meet the demands of this Administration.

I am frustrated because this process did not have to result in a partisan reauthorization. Last Congress, the original *A Stronger Workforce for America Act* had statements of support from more than 115 organizations across the ideological spectrum and the workforce community. It is telling that we cannot say the same for this bill.

At a time when prices and unemployment are rising, this Committee had a real opportunity to advance a bipartisan bill that would strengthen our workforce system and deliver real results for workers and employers. Instead, we are marking up legislation that walks away from that progress—with no path for passage in the Senate.

For these reasons, I cannot support H.R. 8210 in its current form and urge my colleagues to oppose this reworked and highly flawed version of the WIOA reauthorization bill. I yield back.