

## **Member Day Hearing Remarks**

- Thank you, Chairman Walberg, and Ranking Member Scott, for giving me the opportunity to speak here today and thank you for all the hard work you do.
- I hail from Ohio's Second Congressional District, which stretches across the entirety of southern Ohio, from the Cincinnati suburbs to Ohio's border with West Virginia.
- My district is in the core of Appalachia and is ground zero for many of the issues facing rural America – from the lack of broadband to the shortage of childcare as well as jobs and skilled workers.
- While there are many issues my constituents are concerned about facing, above all, they are concerned about their children's future and the opportunities they will have to move up in the world.
- These are valid concerns, especially as the communities I represent have largely been left behind and neglected by the federal government.

- Over the last forty years, many towns in southern Ohio saw power plants and factories close, jobs shipped overseas, and economic growth shift to the urban centers and the coasts.
- Fortunately, thanks to the hard work of countless community leaders, southern Ohio is starting to make a great comeback, and there are similar encouraging stories across America.
- However, there is more work to be done, and much of the important work Congress will do will take place right here in the Education and Workforce Committee.
- The policies crafted by this committee have the potential to accelerate economic development, improve educational outcomes, and help prepare our young people for good-paying jobs right out of school.
- As a third-generation small business owner, I understand the value of having a skilled workforce.
- To that end, I'm proud that we passed a critical Workforce Pell provision in the *Working Families Tax Cut*, which allows Pell

Grants to be used to gain workforce credentials through short-term career training programs.

- These kinds of creative solutions are key to addressing the skilled labor shortage, which if not addressed, will leave us with a shortage of:
  - Electricians
  - Carpenters
  - Plumbers
  - HVAC technicians
  - And many other essential workers.
- Luckily, community organizations across America are stepping up to fill this gap and help train a skilled workforce.
- In my district,
  - United Steel Workers Local 689 has partnered with the Department of Energy to train individuals on plant safety and inspection.

- The University of Rio Grande has partnered with Ohio Means Jobs to offer programming for in-demand jobs outside of the traditional 4-year pathway.
- And the Growing Rural Independence Together Project partners with countless organizations across southern Ohio to provide career services.
- I know I speak for everyone across Ohio's Second Congressional District when I say that we are grateful for the work they do in helping people develop a skill and find meaning in their work.
- While organizations in my district are grateful for the federal funds they receive, I have heard from them that the requirements attached to these federal funds are too restrictive, resulting in fewer individuals being served.
- That is exactly why I'm introducing the *Workforce Flexibility Act* in the coming weeks.

- This bill, supported by numerous workforce organizations and stakeholders, would help provide flexibility to our local organizations as they seek to train the next generation.
- In one WIOA district that covers three counties in southern Ohio, they had to turn away more than three hundred people from their training program due to the lack of flexibility under Title I of WIOA.
- This is extremely disheartening as every business I visit needs workers, and fewer people are getting involved in skilled trades.
- There are many organizations that would benefit from more flexibility.
- In the end, the real beneficiaries will be the young people this flexibility will put on track to achieve the American Dream.
- A job they can be proud of, and which allows them to own a home and raise a family.
- As the Committee continues to evaluate legislation this Congress and work on the WIOA reauthorization, I look forward to working

with you to embrace more local flexibility so we can fast-track workforce development and revitalize towns and cities across America.

- The changes in my bill could get more people trained, grow our workforce in rural America, and resurrect our small towns as we bring manufacturing back to the United States.
- I want to thank the committee again for the opportunity to speak here today, and I appreciate the work you do on these pressing issues.
- I respectfully urge you to include my Workforce Flexibility Act in the WIOA reauthorization.
- And I look forward to continuing to work with you to usher in America's Golden Age.
- Thank you and I yield back.