



# Opening Statement

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION & LABOR

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The Hon. Robert C. "Bobby" Scott • Chairman

**Opening Statement of Chairwoman Susan Davis (CA-53)**  
Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment Hearing  
*Innovations in Expanding Registered Apprenticeship Programs*  
2175 Rayburn House Office Building  
Wednesday, March 27, 2019 | 10:15 a.m.

This morning, the Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment is holding its first hearing to examine opportunities to expand access to high-quality Registered Apprenticeship programs.

Registered Apprenticeships are a valuable tool in our effort to help more Americans get the skills they need to compete in the modern economy. For apprentices, these programs provide access to:

- Good paying jobs and benefits that provide employees increased wages as they build their skills,
- A valuable credential that can help secure future employment, and
- Advancement along a rewarding career path.

Over 90 percent of apprentices are employed after completing their apprenticeships and earn an average starting wage above \$60,000 annually. And, over the course of a career, individuals with apprenticeship credentials can earn around \$300,000 more than non-apprentices.

Registered apprenticeship programs are similarly beneficial for employers that can build a pipeline of more productive and talented workers who are more likely to remain at their jobs for an extended period of time.

Studies have shown that for every dollar that employers invest in apprenticeships, they receive \$1.47 in increased productivity, reduced waste, and greater innovation.

But not all job training programs are shown to be this beneficial. The key ingredient that has made registered apprenticeships so successful is the consistent quality found across all apprenticeship programs.

Quality standards in registered apprenticeship programs not only ensure that apprentices build valuable skills while earning a salary and benefits, they also ensure apprentices receive a credential that is valued in the labor market and recognized by employers across the country.

Registered apprenticeship programs require employers to develop a plan combining classroom and on-the-job training. This includes a schedule for when and how the program will help workers increase wages as they build skills and competencies.

In June 2017, the White House issued [an executive order](#) creating the President's Taskforce on Apprenticeship Expansion. The taskforce recommended a second track for apprenticeships—called Industry Recognized Apprenticeship Programs, or IRAPs.

IRAPs would allow private entities to both create and set their own standards for “apprenticeship” programs without the quality assurance and approval of the Department of Labor. In other words, IRAPs would not be required to maintain the same quality standards as registered apprenticeships but would still have access to the same taxpayer dollars dedicated for high-quality Registered Apprenticeships.

The rationale behind this proposed change is that the current apprenticeship system is too burdensome and inflexible.

Today, we have witnesses who run Registered Apprenticeship programs in sectors including information technology, insurance, and construction.

The Committee welcomes their perspectives on:

- Whether the Registered Apprenticeship model meets the needs of their industries,
- Ways to improve the system while maintaining quality, and
- How to support expansion of high-quality programs.

To ensure that the proposed IRAPs program does not waste taxpayer dollars, we need to examine:

- If it will provide employers with the consistent level of quality standards, they already expect from Registered Apprenticeship programs, and
- If it is necessary to divert resources to maintain two apprenticeship programs as opposed to improving and modernizing one National Apprenticeship System

According to the Harvard Business Review, there are currently 47 occupations—26 of which commonly require a four-year degree—that would benefit from creating new apprenticeships but have required skills that can be attained without one. This includes professions such as computer support specialists.

And just as we must expand apprenticeships into new sectors, we must expand into non-traditional demographics. Women make up nearly half the U.S. workforce, yet account for less than 10 percent of apprentices.

I know through my conversations that there is strong bipartisan support for apprenticeships. Last Congress, I joined with Mr. Guthrie in introducing the APPRENTICE Act, which would have expanded apprenticeship programs and awareness as well as created better alignment between the Departments of Education and Labor.

There are a number of other good proposals we will consider, such as expanding pre-apprenticeships and growing the number of intermediaries who can assist small and medium sized businesses.

I want to thank the witnesses for traveling long distances to be with us here today. I look forward to their testimony. I now yield to the Ranking Member, Mr. Smucker, for the purpose of an opening statement.