

Opening Statement of Congresswoman Susan Davis

Higher Education and Workforce Development (HEWD) Subcommittee Hearing

“Helping Americans Get Back to Work: Implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act”

Thursday, June 15, 2017 | 10:00 AM

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Thank you, Chairman Guthrie. I appreciate you convening this important hearing, and I want to thank all of our witnesses for being here today.

Today’s hearing is focused on the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act – or WIOA. This landmark bipartisan law, whose primary author is the distinguished Chairwoman of our Committee, Dr. Foxx, was signed by President Obama nearly three years ago.

I was proud to be among the 400 House Members who supported WIOA when it passed because it sought to help workers, benefit businesses, revitalize our economy, and strengthen the middle class. Specifically, WIOA sought to ensure working people of all ages and all abilities could get the training and skills they need to obtain well-paying

jobs. It also sought to ensure employers could hire a skilled workforce so our country can compete in the global economy.

In my district the workforce system has become an incubator for developing innovative training programs for young people. Tech sector industry leaders, the workforce system and educators are coming together to develop programs where young people emerge with amazing skills.

WIOA encourages and even demands that these groups come together to meet the needs of an ever changing economy. The reality is that as budgets are cut, the first programs to go are the newest and most forward-thinking. The innovation that WIOA is fostering will be halted, preventing the expansion of these partnerships.

Mr. Chairman, fulfilling an innovative vision of our workforce becomes even more challenging when you consider the cuts put forth in the President's proposed budget. These cuts would undermine the progress and advancements our workforce system has made in the past few years.

[INTERNAL NOTE: Please pause to allow for power point slide to be projected on to the Committee hearing room's screen.]

As you'll see on the screen, the President proposed funding cuts for the youth, adult training, dislocated workers, and adult education formula funds for each of our home states by about 40 percent from current funding levels. In all, the President's budget proposed a staggering \$1 billion in cuts to these programs.

More importantly, we have not yet had a full year of WIOA implementation data to analyze. It is unthinkable to consider cutting critical programs without giving them a chance to become established and successful in our communities.

Modernizing our nation's workforce system is critical. Researchers estimate that at our nation's current rates of training and educating, the United States will face a shortage of 5 million skilled, educated workers by 2020. And by 2020, 65 percent of all jobs will require some form of post-secondary degree or credential.

In this hearing, I hope we can take a close look at how our workforce systems have improved since WIOA. But also, I hope to hear

how we can build upon these successes and surmount any challenges.

Together, we must ensure that WIOA fulfills its goals of improving the quality of job training programs and aligning training to real-world labor market needs. In particular, we must be sure to empower people with disabilities, disconnected youth, and dislocated workers who have faced barriers to entering our workforce systems for far too long.

In the weeks and months ahead, I'm hopeful that Congress will reject the President's proposed cuts to job training programs and make the right investments in our nation's workforce development system.

But we shouldn't stop there. We should be working together on a bipartisan basis – just like we did with WIOA – to help workers get ahead, make college more affordable and accessible, and restore balance to the economy so all Americans can provide a better future for their families.

Thank you, Chairman Guthrie, for convening today's hearing and all the witnesses for taking time out of their schedules to be with us.

I yield back my time.