

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

May 28, 2025

The Honorable Lori Chavez-DeRemer
Secretary
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Ave, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20210

Dear Secretary Chavez-DeRemer:

We write to express our strong opposition to the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) unlawful cancellation¹ of dozens of Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations (WANTO) grants and urge DOL to reverse course. These grants are vital to increasing the number of women apprentices in both the skilled trades and non-traditional apprenticeships.

In 1992, the *Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations Act* found that “women face significant barriers to their full and effective participation in apprenticeable occupations.”² Three decades later, women continue to face significant barriers in apprenticeable jobs, such as workplace harassment,³ which depress the utilization of apprenticeships by women. DOL's Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) in 2024 notes that “women are significantly underrepresented in Registered Apprenticeship Programs and in high-growth, high-wage occupations generally. While women make up about half of the United States labor force, they compose only approximately 14 percent of Registered Apprenticeship Program participants.”⁴ Cancelling these grants will further exacerbate this disparity, as it removes any role DOL had in increasing the enrollment of women in registered apprenticeship programs.

The cancellation letters sent to active grantees on May 6, 2025, stated that DOL's reason for the grant cancellations is “because it no longer effectuates the U.S. Department of Labor's (Department) priorities for its grant funding.”⁵ Whether or not a grant program “effectuates” DOL priorities is immaterial as DOL does not get to pick and choose which grant programs authorized

¹ Lawrence Ukenye, Labor Department terminates dozens of Women's Bureau grants, POLITICOPRO (May, 6, 2025), <https://subscriber.politicopro.com/article/2025/05/labor-department-terminates-dozens-of-womens-bureau-grants-00332125>.

² 29 U.S.C. §§ 2501-2509.

³ Caroline Preston, *'You don't say things': The jobs where sexual harassment and discrimination never stopped*, USA TODAY (Jan, 21, 2021), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2021/01/31/women-push-curb-sexual-harassment-trade-job-apprenticeships/4309434001/>.

⁴ Notice of Availability of Funds and Funding Opportunity Announcement for: FY24 Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations (WANTO) Technical Assistance Grant Program, FOA-WB-24-00.

⁵ E-mail with a copy of termination letter from a WANTO grantee to Comm. on Educ. & Workforce Democratic Staff (May. 9, 2025, at 13:38 ET) (on file with staff).

and appropriated by Congress it wishes to carry out. In 1992, Congress passed, and President Bush signed into law, the *Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations Act*.⁶ The law states that “the Secretary shall carry out an outreach program...to prepare the workplace to employ women in apprenticeable occupations and other nontraditional occupations.”⁷ This should leave little doubt of DOL’s statutory obligation to administer these grants.

Additionally, Congress specifically appropriated funds to WANTO by stating, “of the amounts made available to the Women’s Bureau, not less than \$5,000,000 shall be used for grants authorized by the Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations Act.”⁸ This language mirrors language in prior appropriations acts that funded many of the WANTO remaining active grants that were cancelled, including the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023*⁹; the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022*¹⁰; and the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021*¹¹. DOL cannot unilaterally decide to cancel grants and substitute its judgment for the will of Congress.

For the above-stated reasons, and in keeping with Congress’ oversight responsibilities, we request your responses by no later than June 4, 2025, to the following:

1. Provide DOL’s legal justification for terminating these WANTO grants.
2. Provide a list of every WANTO grant that has been terminated, including the name of the grantee, the grant number, the total amount of the award to each grantee, the amount of funds that each grantee has spent up to the date of the grant’s termination, and the amount of remaining unspent funds for each award.
3. Provide a copy of each letter sent to every grantee notifying them of their grant’s termination.
4. Provide all documents and communications, including downloads, copies, or screenshots of any messages on any digital communications platform, since January 20, 2025, related to the termination of these WANTO grants, including documents and communications between Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) officials and DOL staff.

We look forward to your timely and complete responses to this request. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Democratic Policy Staff at EWDoversight@mail.house.gov and Philip.Tizzani@mail.house.gov.

⁶ 29 U.S.C. §§ 2501-2509.

⁷ 29 U.S.C. § 2502(a).

⁸ Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024 Pub. L. No. 118-47, 138 Stat. 641 (2024).

⁹ Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 Pub. L. No. 117-328, 136 Stat. 4847 (2023).

¹⁰ Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022 Pub. L. No. 117-103, 136 Stat. 434 (2022).

¹¹ Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 Pub. L. No. 116-260, 134 Stat. 1559 (2020).

The Honorable Lori Chavez-DeRemer
May 28, 2025
Page 3

Sincerely,



ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and Workforce



Rosa L. DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations