

**Ranking Member Bobby Scott**  
**Opening Statement for Organizational Meeting**  
**of the Committee on Education and the Workforce – 115<sup>th</sup> Congress**  
**Tuesday, January 24, 2017**  
**Room 2175 – 11:15 a.m.**

Thank you, Chairwoman Foxx, for that very kind introduction. I look forward to working with you. I would like to join the Chairwoman in welcoming the new and returning members to the committee. I have had the honor of working with some of you for many years and I look forward to working with our new colleagues. Now I would like to introduce our new Democratic colleagues.

Congressman Donald Norcross has represented New Jersey's first congressional district since the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress. Representative Norcross previously served in the New Jersey General Assembly. He was also an electrician and a member of the AFL-CIO.

Congresswoman Lisa Blunt Rochester represents Delaware's at-large congressional district. She served as Delaware's Secretary of Labor, Deputy Secretary of Health and Social Services, and the State Personnel Director. She was also the CEO of the Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League.

Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi represents Illinois' 8<sup>th</sup> Congressional District. He served as a Special Assistant Attorney General of Illinois, as a member of the Illinois Housing Development Authority, and as Illinois Deputy Treasurer. He previously ran a small business.

Welcome to all of you. In addition to these new members, we look forward to welcoming two additional new Democratic members to the Committee in the coming weeks.

This Committee is charged with oversight and authority for federal programs and policies that have a profound impact on America's working families. It is our shared responsibility to make decisions, grounded in evidence, that position the federal government as an engine of opportunity – with policies and programs that help millions of Americans make a better life for themselves and their families.

I am very proud of the work we accomplished in the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress. We enacted the Infant Plan of Safe Care and Improvement Act, the Federal Perkins Loan Program Extension Act of 2015, and the Older Americans Reauthorization Act of 2015. We passed five higher education bills, a bill to reinforce career and technical education, and another to reauthorize the JJDPA out of the House. And, I am especially proud of the enactment of the bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act.

I look forward to finding areas where we can work together on a bipartisan basis to ensure faithful implementation and enforcement of ESSA. We can fulfill ESEA's basic promise as a civil rights law by ensuring that implementation is consistent with our shared intent to couple new flexibility for states with strong federal guardrails to ensure equity in education.

I also look forward to working with you to achieve a comprehensive reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. A reauthorization that expands access to college, makes it more affordable, allows students to complete their program with a quality degree or credential that makes them competitive in the 21st century economy.

We have been able to make significant progress on behalf of our nation's young people, but there are many issues that still need our attention. Just to name a few, some of these issues fall under Head Start, federal child nutrition programs, higher education, and our juvenile justice system. I am hopeful that we can find common ground to address these critical issues that will expand opportunities for all American children and students. We should not be wasting time on hurtful measures that would divert public funds from public schools or deny vulnerable students the protections of federal laws.

We also have a lot of work to do to help hardworking Americans secure good-paying jobs. The good news is that our economy today is much healthier than it was eight years ago, when the economy was losing 800,000 jobs per month during the depths of the Great Recession. Today the unemployment rate is below pre-recession levels—reaching 4.7 percent in December of 2016, down from a high of 10 percent in 2010. Private employers have added jobs in 81 of the past 82 months – and over that time the nation experienced the longest streak of sustained job growth on record.

But we still face significant challenges. Too many Americans are struggling to regain a foothold in our rapidly changing economy—including those who lost jobs in the recession, those who are underemployed, and those who work in low-paying jobs.

That is why we must commit to raising the minimum wage so that no one who works full-time has to live in poverty. We must commit to protecting workers' rights by honoring the 40 hour work week, and ensure that people who work overtime earn their time and a half. We must protect and strengthen working people's right to collectively bargain for higher wages and benefits. We must commit to strengthening workplace safety protections and defending the civil rights of workers – including fighting against discrimination and supporting diversity in the workplace. We must also commit to strengthening and fully implementing the Affordable Care Act so that all families have the ability to access quality, affordable healthcare coverage.

I believe that we can find common goals and common ground to get things done, and I look forward to working with you and members of the committee on both sides of the aisle to make sure that this is a productive and successful Congress for the American people.

Thank you, Madame Chairwoman, and I yield back.