



OPENING STATEMENT

House Committee on Education and Labor

Chairman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott

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Full Committee Markup

H.R. 7309 – Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2022

H.R. 7310 – Protecting America's Retirement Security Act

Tuesday, March April 5, 2022 | 10:15 a.m.

Today, the Committee is marking up two bills to support America's workers, families, and businesses.

The first bill, the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2022*, reauthorizes the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014*.

Since the authorization of WIOA expired in 2020, we have had the opportunity to learn from the previous six-year authorization. A guiding principle must be about better connecting more Americans to quality jobs.

Under investing in workforce development allows other economies to outcompete us. While other developed countries spend half to one percent of their gross domestic product on workforce development, the United States only spends one-tenth of one percent. Our nation's economy has a stake in how well we do our job here today.

The *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2022* remedies decades of underfunding so we can finally meet the needs of both workers and businesses. In FY 2023, this legislation will more than double the number of those receiving training services, according to an estimate by the National Association of Workforce Boards.

However, this proposal goes further than just adequately funding WIOA. Specifically, this reauthorization:

- Combats recidivism by funding and making permanent a Department of Labor (DOL) program to assist justice-involved individuals obtain and sustain employment;
- Expands summer and year-round subsidized employment for disconnected youth, in addition to reauthorizing Youth Build;
- Codifies and expands sector-based training programs at the national and local level so that we can fund entire sectors, such as electric cars; and
- Builds community colleges' capacity to provide employment and training programs leading to credentials in in-demand industries.

The Biden-Harris Administration is helping our economy recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and getting Americans back to work. We currently have record low unemployment and record job growth, yet job openings currently exceed applicants and employers are clamoring for skilled workers. To remedy this, it is essential we reauthorize WIOA and expand access to high-quality job training opportunities.

I thank the Chair of the Higher Education and Workforce Investment Subcommittee, the gentlelady from Florida, Ms. Wilson, for leading three hearings on this legislation and championing workforce programs – like Job Corps – that support our nation’s young adults.

The second bill, the *Protecting America’s Retirement Security Act*, or PARSA, sponsored by the gentlelady from Georgia, Representative McBath, takes important steps to help Americans plan and save for a dignified retirement.

We all agree that workers in this country deserve to retire with security. Regrettably, far too many older Americans are working later into their lives and still relying on their next paycheck to make ends meet. Roughly 55 million people nationwide still do not have access to retirement benefits through their employer.

Just last week, the House overwhelmingly passed legislation that would make key improvements to our retirement system. Now, the gentlelady from Georgia’s bill provides us an opportunity to build on that progress and continue to help workers, families, and employers.

PARSA is comprised of legislation – including several bipartisan bills – introduced by Committee Members or other House colleagues.

Specifically, PARSA incorporates:

- A bipartisan bill introduced by the gentlelady from Pennsylvania, Ms. Wild, and the gentlelady from Louisiana, Ms. Letlow, to help 401(k) plan participants better understand the fees they’re paying on their retirement investments.
- A bipartisan bill co-authored by the gentlelady from New Mexico, Ms. Leger-Fernandez, and the gentlelady from Indiana, Ms. Spartz, is intended to help Americans – particularly recent college graduates – boost their financial literacy skills.
- The gentlelady from North Carolina, Ms. Manning, has introduced a bill to provide workers additional opportunities to be part of their employer-sponsored retirement plan and be able to reconsider their previous decision to opt out.
- Representative from Connecticut and the Representative from Wisconsin, Mr. Courtney and Mr. Pocan, introduced a bill that is incorporated in this legislation that boosts employee ownership programs at the Department of Labor.
- And finally, the gentlelady from Illinois, Ms. Underwood has a bill included that includes spousal protections in 401(k) plans.
- Finally, a bipartisan bill authored by our colleagues, the gentlelady from New Jersey and the gentleman from Arkansas, Ms. Watson Coleman and Mr. Hill, to encourage emergency savings to help Americans finance unexpected expenses, such as a flat tire or a busted pipe.

I want to thank Ms. McBath, as well as all the Committee Members, for their leadership on PARSA and individual bills comprising it.

Taken together, the bills before us today strengthen our nation’s workforce and retirement systems and support our nation’s economic recovery. I urge all the Members of the Committee to support these bills.

I am now pleased yield to the distinguished Ranking Member of the Committee, the gentlelady from North Carolina, Dr. Foxx for her opening statement.