



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

Scaling Up Apprenticeships: Building on the Success of International Apprenticeship Models

2175 Rayburn House Office Building

Tuesday, July 16, 2019 | 10:15 a.m.

Before I begin, I'd like to thank our distinguished witnesses for traveling across the globe to testify today. The Committee appreciates the time you've taken to prepare your testimony and inform us of the structure and outcomes in your respective apprenticeship systems.

Today, we look forward to learning more about the apprenticeship systems of Australia, Germany, and Switzerland, including how these systems strike a balance between strong government oversight and the flexibility to meet the needs of employers and the labor market through innovation. We hope to use what we learn today to strengthen apprenticeship opportunities here in the U.S.

The U.S. Registered Apprenticeship program has long-provided Americans the opportunity to learn valuable on-the-job skills and earn a stackable and nationally recognized credential that serves as a pathway to the middle class. It is my hope that we can work together on a bipartisan basis to help scale up this model.

For years, the Australian, German, and Swiss apprenticeship systems have been the gold standard of apprenticeship programs around the world. They are not only highly popular and well-supported, but also provide nationally-recognized and portable credentials valued by apprentices and employers alike.

- In Switzerland, fully 1 percent of Gross Domestic Product is dedicated to Apprenticeships, with the private sector covering 60 percent, the cantons or states funding 30 percent, and the federal government covering 10 percent. In the U.S., this level of federal support would amount to approximately \$20 billion per year, nearly two times the total discretionary budget for the entire U.S. Department of Labor today.
- In Germany, the dual system of vocational education and training supports the economy and contributes to a youth unemployment rate of 5 percent, the lowest in the European Union. This compares with 12.7 percent in the U.S., according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- In Australia, the apprenticeship system offers more than 500 occupational apprenticeships and traineeship pathways, including a Digital Apprenticeship Program, open to anyone of working age.

All three countries have implemented research and evaluation components, which support the continuous evolution of the system and adoption of evidence-based best practices.

During our discussions today, we will examine how these successful international apprenticeship systems utilize substantial investments from both governments and participating employers. I am excited to hear from Dr. Simon Marti, as I was so impressed during my visit to Switzerland with how their apprenticeship system is integrated into their education system and provides permeable pathways for students to choose from.

We will also examine how successful apprenticeship systems look to their state and federal governments for strong national standards to ensure consistent quality and strong protections for apprentices. I look forward to exploring how the German apprenticeship system relies on recognized occupations and training regulations to set nationally-recognized quality standards for apprenticeships. These standards ensure that apprentices earn credentials that are recognized not only by employers across Germany, but across the European Union.

We will be especially interested in learning how successful apprenticeship models expand into new economic sectors through employer collaboration, union involvement, and adoption of guardrails to ensure quality.

I am particularly eager to learn more about the Australian apprenticeship system, which incentivizes new apprenticeship opportunities in high-demand occupations, while also prioritizing the recruitment of underserved groups, such as Indigenous Australians and people with disabilities.

Today's hearing is a unique opportunity for this Committee to discuss best practices for strengthening government oversight, industry innovation, and educational alignment that we can possibly apply to our National Apprenticeship System. These discussions will be a crucial resource as this Committee considers apprenticeship legislation to strengthen apprenticeship opportunities for all Americans.

Thank you, again, to our witnesses for being here today. I look forward to our discussion. Before I yield to the Ranking Member, I wanted to note that I am especially pleased to be holding this hearing on a bipartisan basis.