

Mr. Robert Sainz Responses to Questions for the Record
“Strengthening WIOA: Improving Outcomes for America’s Workforce”

Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development
Committee on Education and Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
March 5, 2025

Representative Ilhan Omar (D-MN-5)

1. With [WIOA] reauthorization still in limbo, localities, workers, and employers across the country are stuck navigating uncertainty instead of expanding opportunity. However, this moment does give us a chance to revisit and refine bipartisan legislation. I have heard directly from our local workforce development boards, unions, and other stakeholders that funding levels and funding flexibility remain a concern. To address urgent workforce issues, Congress must ensure that we give our communities sufficient resources – that can not only meet emerging challenges and opportunities in our rapidly evolving economy, but that are also fit-for-purpose and responsive to local needs and job markets.
 - a. **Q:** One way in which Congress can provide this type of comprehensive, dynamic support is by providing dedicated funding sources for wraparound services. Mr. Sainz, could you discuss the important role of supportive services, particularly for opportunity youth and other underserved populations?
 - i. **A:** We know that young people need stable housing, reliable transportation, access to food, and strong mentors to succeed in school and the workplace. Opportunity youth and other underserved populations are no different, but they may lack access to these supportive services. The workforce system, along with other partners in the ecosystem, can provide these supports so opportunity youth can pursue their education and career goals. Additionally, nearly 30% of opportunity youth are parents. This means that they also may need child care in order to participate in workforce training programs and school.
 - b. **Q:** How do such supplementary services to job training, such as transportation and career counseling, impact worker participation and training completion rates?
 - i. **A:** Reliable transportation and career counseling are necessary supports for young people in workforce training programs. If a young person can’t safely and reliably get to a program, they won’t be able to receive these services. Career counseling is also very important to expose young people

to employment options that they may not otherwise be aware of and support them in determining a career that fits their skills, strengths, and interests. Both supportive services can increase worker participation and completion rates. [Research](#) from the Institute for Women's Policy Research found that program completion is higher in programs that report that their participants' supportive service needs are met well.