



Written Statement for the Record of Emily M. Dickens, J.D.
Chief Administrative Officer of SHRM

House Committee on Small Business

“AI on Main Street: How AI is Shaping the Future of Small Business”

Tuesday, July 14, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.

Dear Chairman Williams, Ranking Member Velázquez, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for holding the hearing entitled “AI on Main Street: How AI is Shaping the Future of Small Business” and for the opportunity to submit testimony for the record. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming how businesses operate, compete, and grow. For America’s small businesses, AI is becoming an essential tool that helps employers address workforce challenges, improve productivity, and remain competitive.

SHRM is a half-billion-dollar trade association and the fourth-largest membership-based organization in the world, representing nearly 340,000 HR and business leaders through a network of 550 affiliates spanning every U.S. state and congressional district, with members in 174 countries worldwide. More than 95% of the Fortune 500 are represented within SHRM's membership, providing SHRM with a unique perspective on the workforce challenges and opportunities facing organizations of every size, industry, and sector.

As a leading workforce and economic stakeholder, SHRM represents the employers and HR leaders who create jobs, develop talent, drive innovation, and power economic growth. Because work is the foundation of a strong economy, SHRM brings a real-world employer perspective to workforce policy and works to advance practical solutions that expand economic opportunity, strengthen business competitiveness, and build a stronger economy.

For small businesses, successfully adopting AI depends not only on access to technology, but on a workforce equipped to use it effectively. Small businesses comprise nearly half (41%) of SHRM's membership, giving SHRM a unique perspective on how AI is reshaping today's workplace. Our research demonstrates both the workforce challenges employers face and the opportunities AI presents.

SHRM's [2026 Talent Trends report](#) found that nearly 7 in 10 HR professionals (68%) reported difficulty recruiting full-time employees, while more than half (53%) said recruiting has become more difficult compared with one year ago. Adding to these workforce challenges, technology continues to reshape the workplace and the skills employers need to succeed. Over a quarter of HR professionals (27%) reported hiring for positions requiring new skills that their organizations had not previously needed. Among those, 77% reported difficulty finding qualified candidates for those roles. Notably,



changing technology was identified as the leading driver of new skills requirements, increasing 12 percentage points over the previous year.

For many small businesses, AI is not simply about automation—it is about helping address workforce challenges while improving productivity.

SHRM's [The State of AI in HR 2026](#) research shows that employers are already realizing AI's benefits. Today, 62% of organizations use AI somewhere within their organization, though adoption remains significantly lower among organizations with fewer than 100 employees (33%) than those with more than 5,000 employees (60%). This gap underscores the importance of expanding access to AI literacy, workforce training, and practical implementation resources for small businesses.

The findings also show that AI adoption has led to minimal organization-wide impact, such as job displacement and the creation of new roles. Organizations using AI are 5.7 times more likely to report shifts in job responsibilities than job displacement. While only 7% reported job displacement, 57% reported creating new upskilling and reskilling opportunities for employees. HR professionals also report that AI has improved workplace efficiency (87%), work quality (75%), and creativity (70%).

Together, these trends demonstrate that the future of work will depend on workforce adaptability, continuous learning, and the responsible integration of AI across workplaces of every size. SHRM President and CEO, Johnny C. Taylor, Jr., SHRM-SCP, has stated, “AI + [Human Intelligence] = [Return on Investment]” to underscore that AI delivers its greatest value when paired with human intelligence, judgment, adaptability, creativity, and leadership.

While AI presents significant opportunities, many employers—particularly smaller organizations—continue to face barriers to adoption. Among organizations not currently using AI, SHRM found that 67% cite a lack of awareness of AI's capabilities as the primary obstacle, while nearly half (49%) identify technical concerns and 38% report limited organizational resources as barriers. These findings suggest that many employers are not resistant to AI; rather, they need practical guidance, accessible education, and trusted resources to implement these technologies responsibly and effectively.

SHRM encourages Congress to prioritize:

- Expanding access to AI literacy, upskilling and reskilling opportunities, and workforce training that prepare employers and workers to succeed in an AI-enabled economy.
- Establishing a clear, nationally consistent framework for workplace AI that provides employers with practical guidance while avoiding a patchwork of state and local requirements.
- Supporting proportional and scalable AI governance expectations for small and mid-sized employers that reflect organizational size, available resources, and operational capacity, while providing practical implementation guidance and technical assistance.
- Avoiding overly burdensome compliance requirements that could limit responsible AI adoption by small businesses and HR departments of one.

The future of work will not be defined by AI alone, but by how effectively employers empower people to use it responsibly. [SHRM has developed practical principles grounded in real-world employer experience to help inform a national framework for workplace AI governance.](#) SHRM stands ready to work with the Committee and Congress to advance policies that support responsible AI adoption, strengthen productivity, and enhance America's economic competitiveness.