

Congress of the United States
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Small Business
2361 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6515

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Subcommittee on Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Workforce Development

FROM: Committee Majority Staff

DATE: September 20, 2024

RE: Subcommittee Hearing Titled: “Avenues to Success: Examining Workforce Training Programs for Employees”

On **September 25, 2024, at 10:00 AM ET**, the Committee on Small Business Subcommittee on Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Workforce Development will hold a hearing titled “**Avenues to Success: Examining Workforce Training Programs for Employees.**” The meeting will convene in room 2360 of the Rayburn House Office Building. The purpose of this hearing is to examine the challenges of the current labor market and examine the resources available to help small business owners expand their labor pool.

I. Witnesses

- **Ms. Ashley Gamba**, Executive Director, Community Options, Inc.
- **Mr. Frank Stento**, Director of Business Development, Painters and Allied Trades Union District Council #4
- **Mr. Neal Strange**, Director of Education, Indiana Kentucky Ohio Regional Council of Carpenters Joint Apprenticeship and Training Fund

II. Background

Small businesses are greatly impacted by the nations labor shortage. 40 percent of small business owners struggle to fill job openings in the month of August with 20 percent of small businesses stating labor shortage is their number one issue.¹ Unfortunately, this issue is not unique to small businesses and some have even labeled the 2024 labor market as “one of the most challenging ...in our lifetime.”²

¹ NAT’L FED’N OF INDEP. BUS., SMALL BUS. ECONOMIC TRENDS, 1 (Aug. 6, 2024).

² Madeline Coggins, 2024 will be ‘toughest labor market ‘in our lifetime’: Report, FOX BUSINESS (Apr. 22, 2024).

Currently, there are 8.2 million job openings in the United States, and only 7.2 unemployed people.³ Tapping into the workforce of people with disabilities is one way to begin to bridge this gap. People with disabilities are often more than capable of filling needs for businesses in a variety of industries, however they are largely underemployed and underutilized.

The post-pandemic workforce has created unique employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, 1.8 million people with disabilities have joined the workforce – a 28 percent increase from pre-pandemic levels.⁴ Over the same period, the U.S. workforce as a whole grew just one percent.⁵ As of August 2023, 25 percent of adults with disabilities were part of the labor force – the highest level in 15 years.⁶

As small business owners continue to struggle finding qualified workers, the U.S. House of Representatives has been exploring ways to help expand the applicant pool through workforce development. The U.S. House Committee on Small Business passed H.R. 1730, the Supporting Small Business and Career and Technical Education Act of 2023 to help foster a better relationship between the SBA and Technical Education. This commonsense legislation helps connect small businesses to individuals in career and technical education to help address the labor challenges in today’s market.

On April 9, 2024, the House passed the bipartisan H.R. 6655, a Stronger Workforce for America Act to help bolster America’s workforce. This legislation makes critical improvements to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act that will expand the skills development, strengthen the relationship between employers and the workforce system, and put more Americans on the pathway to successful careers.⁷ This legislation will help workers upskill, hold states and local workforce boards accountable, and strengthen workforce education programs.

These challenging economic times coupled with the U.S. labor shortage make doing business for small entities just that much more difficult. Workforce training across industries is an important part of bridging this labor gap to ensuring that Main Street has every resource they need to thrive.

III. Conclusion

Small business owners are facing numerous challenges with inflation, taxes, and a tight labor market. In this hearing, we will hear directly from individuals working to help the small business community address labor challenges and get Main Street back on the pathway to success.

³ Stephanie Ferguson, Understanding America’s Labor Shortage, U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE (July 24, 2024).

⁴ Harriet Torry, *Labor Shortages, Remote Work Fuel Job Gains for Workers With Disabilities*, THE WALL ST. J. (Nov. 4, 2023).

⁵ Harriet Torry, *Labor Shortages, Remote Work Fuel Job Gains for Workers With Disabilities*, THE WALL ST. J. (Nov. 4, 2023).

⁶ Harriet Torry, *Labor Shortages, Remote Work Fuel Job Gains for Workers With Disabilities*, THE WALL ST. J. (Nov. 4, 2023).

⁷ Press Release *House Passes Transformative Bill to Update Federal Workforce Development Programs*, H. Comm. Ed. And Workforce (Apr. 9, 2024).