



**STATEMENT OF
TYRONE FERRENS
GRADUATE OF PROJECT JUMPSTART**

**BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES**

SEPTEMBER 6, 2017

Thank you Chairman Smith, and all members of this committee for your invitation to testify before your hearing on 'Missing from the Labor Force: Examining Declining Employment among Working-Age Men.'

My name is Tyrone Ferrens am here today to testify on behalf of a workforce development program in Baltimore City called Project JumpStart. I was 41 years old when I enrolled in the program and it gave me a second chance at life.

Prior to Project JumpStart, I was a drug dealer, an addict for 16 years, I was arrested 14 times and incarcerated in 3 states. When I was young, I always wanted to be an electrician but, after my first arrest, I assumed I ruined that chance. After my last conviction and release, I spent a year in court-ordered rehab and met a gentleman who informed me of Project JumpStart.

I enrolled immediately. From the very beginning of the 13-week program, it instilled in me something I did not have; a sense of hope. Every tool I needed to succeed was provided, not just physical tools but a resume, mock interviews, conflict resolution skills, employer expectations and basic knowledge of tools. From any legal hurdle, to transportation issues, to a learning issue, Project JumpStart was there with a solution.

The program is successful because, despite our tarnished track records, everyone involved believed that we could accomplish our goals. The alumni encourage the students during and after the courses. As a student, seeing the alumni as a success when they have made similar mistakes as yourself, you cannot help but be reassured.

My goal upon exiting prison was to be present in my children's' lives and since Project JumpStart I have rebuilt my family. I have been a present father for my son who will be the first in the family to attend college, I am a homeowner, and my daughter, who is 30 is going through Project JumpStart to get a second chance at success.

Currently, I am working as a journeyman electrician with TEI on a 3-million-dollar job alongside five other Project JumpStart graduates. Project JumpStart can be an answer to the decline in employment among working-age men in this country.

Thank you,

Tyrone Ferrens

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- ABC Baltimore has Apprenticeship Training Facilities in Baltimore City and Baltimore County
 - Project JumpStart training takes place exclusively in Baltimore City