

Questions for the record
U.S. House Select Committee on Economic Disparity and Fairness in Growth
Hearing: “Our Changing Economy: The Economic Effects of Technological Innovation,
Automation and the Future of Work”
Wednesday, November 3, 2021

From Congresswoman Gwen Moore to Ms. Baird

1. I am concerned that prospective workers are often lured into training programs that result in limited value certifications, where trainees acquire credentials that are not widely recognized or transferable. Do you agree that federal resources expended on workforce training should be directed to programs that actually put people on a pathway to gainful employment? If so, which criteria do you think is important in trying to determine the effectiveness of these programs in providing actual employable skills to people?
2. You emphasize the importance of public-private partnerships in developing training programs. I firmly agree with that premise. But you also mentioned during the hearing that there are policy choices that have led to a decrease in employer provided training. An employer recently told me and my office that they do not provide job training because they are a profit-making business. With that kind of mentality, of course it falls on government to do so. Please describe what some of those policy decisions are that have caused employers to shirk these responsibilities. Please also share any suggestions you might have on how we can reverse this trend and encourage more employers to be involved in directly reskilling and upskilling employees.
3. You touched on the importance of a new adult training system because we need to contend with the fact that skills now become dated much more quickly than they did in the past. It is particularly the case when dealing with technological innovation. In this new system, do you envision that people who would take advantage of this program would be disconnected from work during that time? Should we help them with living costs while they are retraining, or should we expect them to work minimum wage jobs at the same time?

From Congresswoman Gwen Moore to Dr. Dubravac

1. In your testimony, you provide some examples of employers using technology to train their employees. Have you done any research into whether opportunities like that are limited to certain types of work or what barriers might exist to undertake such activity more broadly, across industries and sectors? Are only big companies able to undertake similar reskilling efforts?

From Congresswoman Gwen Moore to Dr. Broady

1. One thing that is troubling to me is there are no more entry-level jobs for people with entry-level skills, that is, positions that have historically been at businesses where employees could rise and climb the ladder – ones that foster economic mobility with less job insecurity. Those opportunities seem to be missing because those kinds of entry-level jobs, like at manufacturing facilities, require you to have mid-level skills even to get your foot in the door. Can you speak to whether you have also observed this trend?
2. Can you speak to some of the employment barriers in that new graduates from vocational or even 4-year degree programs face?

From Congresswoman Gwen Moore to Mr. Orrell

1. During the hearing, you mentioned that, in addition to developing workforce training programs that are tailored to local and regional markets, workers should be given resources directly to

support their own decision making as to what is best for them. Please elaborate on what resources you are contemplating. For example, do you think that income support payments for workers who have exhausted their unemployment compensation, health insurance coverage, and childcare allowances would be helpful?

2. During the hearing, you expressed support for decentralized workforce development and economic development policies and activities, ones rooted at the local level. I am concerned that focusing on local employer demands and employment trends to drive our workforce programs alone may not be viable as a long-term strategy because the assessment of employer's needs at any one time may leave employees particularly vulnerable to shifts in local employment opportunities while missing out on opportunities to gain skills in employment that may be growing nationally.
 - a. Do you see a potential for a greater role for the federal government to help direct workforce development policies for example with respect to the harmonization of national and local employment and skill development objectives?
 - b. What are the risks of the current approach which appears to focus on local employer needs that may not match national employment trends or needs?
3. In your testimony, you emphasize the importance of noncognitive skills such as communication, teamwork, and collaboration and argue that such skills are more difficult to inculcate in a worker than technical skills. The programs that I am aware of that seek to develop social skills are insulting – focusing on things like waking up when the alarm goes off, getting to work on time, communicating with one's boss and customers. These are skills that someone who has worked as a grocery cashier undoubtedly already possesses. It is also my experience that some of the skills you list, like teamwork and critical thinking, are skills that are honed over time. You focus on the role in fostering these skills played by family, schools, religious groups, sports leagues, and community organizations. You also underscore training programs that integrate the teaching of noncognitive skills with technical training programs. Do you agree that these skills are skills that are developed and improved over time and through experiences, including employment?