



WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF

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BEFORE

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Subcommittee on Employment and Workplace Safety**

HEARING

“The Impact of AI on the Workforce”

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“Used strategically, ethically, and responsibly, AI becomes leverage. Used carelessly, it becomes liability. AI Literacy decides which.”

Submitted on behalf of Better Business Bureau of Southern Colorado

Statement Summary

Artificial intelligence is already changing how Americans work, learn, make decisions, and compete. The central workforce challenge is no longer whether AI will be adopted; it is whether workers, employers, educators, and communities will be prepared to use it responsibly and share in its benefits.

“AI is not an Oracle; it is an Ideation Engine”

Since 2025, I have trained over 5,500 people across Colorado and around the country on the practical and responsible use of AI. That work has given me a front-row seat to extraordinary curiosity and real anxiety. Business owners want to know which tools are credible. Nonprofit leaders want to know how to expand impact without compromising privacy. Educators want to know how to prepare students for jobs that are changing faster than curricula. Workers want to know whether AI will replace them or help them become more capable.

Better Business Bureau of Southern Colorado created the BBB AI Hub (visit it here at www.bbbaihub.org) to help close the gap between the speed of technological change and the ability of people and organizations to respond. In collaboration with the Pikes Peak Workforce Center, the UCCS College of Business, Exponential Impact, the Colorado Springs Chamber & EDC, the Pikes Peak Small Business Development Center, the City of Colorado Springs, the Colorado AI Alliance, the Pikes Peak Business Alliance (PPBEA), and the National Association of Workforce Boards, the Hub connects AI literacy, responsible adoption, governance, and workforce preparation. Our experience suggests that the nation does not need to build an entirely new delivery system. Trusted local infrastructure already exists in workforce centers, community colleges, libraries, BBBs, chambers, and nonprofit networks. It needs practical curriculum, capacity, coordination, and sustained support.

My recommendations are straightforward: invest in rapid AI literacy through trusted local intermediaries; provide practical governance and vendor-evaluation tools for small organizations; improve task-level workforce data; prepare educators and students for AI-enabled work; protect human accountability in consequential employment decisions; and ensure rural communities, small employers, nonprofits, and workers outside technology centers can participate in the opportunity rather than absorb only the disruption.

I. A Cautiously Optimistic View of AI

My position is neither uncritically pro-AI nor reflexively anti-AI. The loudest public voices often occupy the extremes. One side presents AI as an unqualified good that should be adopted as quickly as possible. The other presents it as a force that will inevitably destroy jobs, erode learning, and diminish human value. Neither perspective is useful to the small-business owner deciding whether to purchase a new platform, the workforce professional helping a displaced worker, the teacher redesigning an assignment, or the nonprofit director with three employees and no technology department.

Cautious optimism means holding two realities at the same time. AI can improve productivity, reduce administrative burden, strengthen customer service, broaden access to expertise, and help small organizations accomplish work that previously required larger teams. I have watched people use AI to organize complex information, improve communication, accelerate research, and turn ideas into usable plans.

I have also watched people enter sensitive customer information into public systems, accept fabricated citations as fact, rely on incomplete or biased outputs, and purchase products marketed as “AI-powered” without understanding what the technology actually did. These are not abstract concerns. They are predictable consequences of adoption moving faster than education and governance.

The question before us is not simply whether AI is good or bad. The better questions are: Who will understand it? Who will have access to useful training? Who will be accountable when it influences a consequential decision? Which communities will receive the productivity gains, and which will bear the disruption? Public policy should help answer those questions before market forces answer them by default.

II. What I Am Seeing in Classrooms and Communities

Since 2025, I have trained over 5,500 individuals through classes, workshops, presentations, and community conversations across Colorado and around the country. The audiences have included business owners, employees, educators, nonprofit leaders, workforce professionals, students, and community leaders. Although their industries and responsibilities differ, the same themes appear repeatedly.

- People are interested in AI, but many do not know where to begin or which information to trust.
- Many organizations are already using AI informally, even when leadership believes adoption has not started.
- Employees frequently receive access to tools before receiving guidance about privacy, verification, intellectual property, bias, or human review.
- Small organizations are overwhelmed by vendor claims and lack the legal, technical, and procurement capacity available to large enterprises.
- Educators recognize that AI will be part of students' futures, but they need support to distinguish responsible learning from shortcut-taking and academic dishonesty.
- Fear often declines when people receive hands-on instruction and a realistic understanding of both capabilities and limitations.

That is the posture I encourage in every room: curiosity about AI produces better questions, better verification, and better decisions than either uncritical enthusiasm or reflexive dismissal.

The most common problem I observe is not that people refuse to use AI. It is that they trust it too quickly or use it without enough context. AI can become a cognitive crutch that replaces thought, or a catalyst that improves thought. The difference is not the tool alone; it is the quality of instruction, the expectations around its use, and the presence of human judgment.

The framing I return to most often in class is this: AI is not an oracle, it is an ideation engine. An oracle is consulted for answers and believed. An ideation engine is used to generate options, surface considerations a person had not thought of, stress-test an assumption, draft a first version, or restate a complex idea in plainer terms. The output is raw material for thinking, not a conclusion to be adopted. When people treat AI as an oracle, they outsource judgment and inherit whatever errors, gaps, or biases the system carried. When they treat it as an ideation engine, they stay in the decision, and the technology makes them faster and more thorough without making them less accountable.

This distinction has practical consequences in the workplace. A manager who asks AI to draft three approaches to a staffing problem, then applies experience and knowledge of the team to choose among them, has used the tool well. A manager who asks AI who to lay off and acts on the answer has not. The same is true of a nurse checking a care protocol, a small-business owner reviewing a contract summary, or a teacher building a lesson plan. In every case the value comes from the human bringing context the system does not have—local knowledge, ethical judgment, and accountability for the outcome.

III. The BBB AI Hub: A Local Model for Workforce Preparation

Better Business Bureau has spent more than a century helping people make informed marketplace decisions and helping businesses build trust. AI is now changing both sides of that mission. It is changing how companies operate, how consumers encounter information, how products are marketed, and how fraud and

misinformation can be created and scaled. For BBB of Southern Colorado, AI literacy and AI governance are therefore a natural extension of marketplace trust.

We created the BBB AI Hub to provide practical, accessible, and responsible AI education. The Hub is designed for people who do not need to become engineers but do need to make better decisions about AI. Its work centers on four connected priorities:

Priority	What It Means
AI literacy	Understanding what AI can and cannot do; writing effective instructions; verifying outputs; protecting sensitive information; and recognizing misinformation, bias, and fabricated content.
Workforce preparation	Helping workers use AI to become more capable, helping employers redesign work thoughtfully, and connecting training to actual roles and advancement opportunities.
AI governance	Creating clear rules about approved tools, restricted data, human review, accountability, documentation, and employee training.
Marketplace trust	Helping organizations evaluate AI vendors and claims before making purchasing or implementation decisions.

Our collaboration with the Pikes Peak Workforce Center is especially important because AI education and workforce services are too often treated as separate activities. They should be connected. Workforce centers understand local employers, job seekers, occupations, and barriers to employment. Community-based organizations understand trust and access. Education providers understand learning. When these capabilities are aligned, AI training can be connected to real jobs, incumbent-worker development, reemployment, and advancement rather than existing as a stand-alone technology demonstration.

This partnership also offers a broader lesson for federal policy: the country already has local institutions capable of reaching workers and small employers. Federal support should strengthen these institutions rather than creating programs that are difficult to access, overly technical, or disconnected from local labor-market needs.

IV. AI Literacy Must Become a Foundational Workforce Skill

AI literacy should not be confused with learning one product. Tools will change. Interfaces will change. The durable skill is knowing how to work with AI systems critically and responsibly. At a minimum, workers and employers should understand:

- How to describe a task clearly and provide appropriate context.
- How to evaluate whether AI is suitable for the task at all.

- How to verify factual claims, calculations, citations, and recommendations.
- How to protect customer, employee, student, patient, financial, and proprietary information.
- How bias can enter data, prompts, outputs, and decisions.
- When human review is required and who remains accountable.
- How to document and communicate the use of AI when transparency matters.

AI literacy should be role-based. A teacher, human-resources manager, small-business owner, customer-service employee, and cybersecurity professional do not need the same training. Organizations should identify the tasks people actually perform, the risks attached to those tasks, and the level of review required. This is more effective than generic training and more realistic for employers with limited time and resources.

AI literacy is also inseparable from critical thinking. The presence of AI does not make critical thinking less important; it makes it more visible. A person must decide whether the question is well framed, whether the output is credible, what information is missing, and whether the result should influence a human decision. Responsible AI use requires more judgment, not less.

V. AI Governance for Organizations of Every Size

Many organizations are waiting for perfect certainty before establishing an AI policy. That is a mistake. Governance does not require a large compliance department. It begins with practical decisions that any organization can make.

1	Adopt an AI use policy — Define approved and prohibited uses, identify restricted information, and establish expectations for disclosure and human review.
2	Create a role-based literacy plan — Train employees according to the decisions they make, the data they handle, and the risks associated with their work.
3	Require accountable human oversight — AI may support a decision, but a named person should remain responsible when the decision affects employment, safety, education, finances, or access to services.
4	Assess and improve continuously — Tools, risks, and regulations will change. Organizations should review their practices, incidents, and training on a regular schedule.

The goal of governance is not to prevent experimentation. It is to create a safe environment for experimentation. Clear boundaries give employees confidence about what they may do, protect the organization from avoidable risk, and help leadership learn from use rather than discover it only after a problem occurs.

VI. Vetting AI Businesses and Tools

The rapid growth of AI has created a marketplace challenge. “AI-powered” has no consistent practical meaning for a buyer. Some products use sophisticated models in meaningful ways. Others add a thin AI feature to an existing platform. Still others rely on marketing claims that a small employer cannot independently verify.

Large companies may have procurement teams, legal counsel, cybersecurity experts, data-governance professionals, and the leverage to negotiate contracts. Small employers and nonprofits frequently have none of these. They need plain-language standards and questions that help them evaluate risk before purchasing or connecting a tool to sensitive systems.

Questions every organization should ask an AI vendor

Area	Questions to Ask
Data practices	What information is collected? Where is it stored? Is customer data used to train the system? Can data be deleted or exported?
Security	What security controls and independent assessments are in place? How are incidents reported?
Performance	What does the product actually do, and what evidence supports claims about accuracy, productivity, or cost savings?
Human accountability	What happens when the system is wrong? Can a human review, override, and explain the result?
Bias and accessibility	How has the system been evaluated across different users and populations?
Contract terms	Who owns inputs and outputs? What happens to data when the contract ends? What indemnification or limitations apply?
Vendor credibility	Who operates the company? Is support available? Are references and claims independently verifiable?

Trusted marketplace organizations can help translate technical questions into usable guidance. This is not a substitute for regulation, cybersecurity, or legal review. It is a practical layer of consumer and business education that can reduce harm before it occurs.

VII. Preparing Educators and Students for an AI-Enabled Workforce

The workforce conversation cannot begin after graduation. Educators are being asked to prepare students for a labor market in which AI will be embedded across occupations, including roles that are not traditionally considered technical. At the same time, schools are navigating legitimate concerns about academic integrity, student privacy, unequal access, and overreliance on automated tools.

The answer is not to pretend AI is absent from the world students will enter. Nor is it to allow unrestricted use without expectations. Schools need age-appropriate AI literacy, clear policies, teacher professional development, and learning experiences that preserve foundational knowledge while teaching students how to use AI as a thought partner rather than a substitute for thought.

The most durable workforce skills will include communication, critical thinking, ethical judgment, creativity, adaptability, domain expertise, and the ability to evaluate AI-generated work. Students should learn how to ask better questions, challenge an output, identify missing context, and explain their own reasoning. These capabilities will help them whether they become nurses, entrepreneurs, technicians, teachers, public servants, or software developers.

VIII. Workforce Disruption, Opportunity, and Fairness

Some jobs will be redesigned, and some tasks—particularly routine, entry-level, and administrative tasks—will be reduced or automated. New roles will emerge, and existing workers may become more productive and capable. But disruption and opportunity are often the same event viewed from different sides.

The honest concern is that new opportunities may not appear in the same communities, at the same wages, or quickly enough for workers whose tasks are displaced. Productivity gains may accrue to organizations without being reflected in job quality, wages, advancement, or reduced workload. Rural communities and smaller employers may face the disruption without having equal access to training, infrastructure, or expertise.

Workers should have a meaningful voice in how AI is introduced into their jobs. Employers should communicate what is changing, what data is being used, how performance will be evaluated, and how employees can challenge an incorrect automated conclusion. Transparency and human accountability are especially important when AI materially affects hiring, promotion, scheduling, performance evaluation, discipline, layoffs, or workplace surveillance.

The message I bring to every class is practical: learn to use these tools strategically, ethically, and responsibly, and they can become leverage. They can help a worker perform the current job more effectively, preserve time for higher-value work, or compete for opportunities that were previously out of reach. That outcome is possible, but it is not automatic. Preparation determines who benefits.

IX. Recommendations to Congress

1

Fund rapid, practical AI upskilling — Use trusted local intermediaries such as workforce centers, community colleges, libraries, BBBs, chambers, and nonprofit networks to deliver short-cycle, role-based training tied to employment and advancement outcomes.

2

Strengthen AI literacy for educators and students — Support teacher professional development, age-appropriate curricula, privacy protections, and career-connected learning that prepares students to work responsibly with AI.

3

Equip small organizations with governance tools — Develop and distribute model AI-use policies, vendor-evaluation guides, cybersecurity practices, and human-oversight frameworks that small businesses and nonprofits can realistically adopt.

4

Improve workforce intelligence — Create timely, task-level, and geographically detailed data so policymakers and local workforce systems can identify disruption before layoffs and align training with changing employer demand.

5

Preserve transparency and human accountability — When AI materially affects hiring, evaluation, discipline, layoffs, scheduling, or surveillance, workers should know it is being used and a person should remain accountable for the decision.

6

Ensure broad access to the benefits — Prioritize rural communities, small employers, underserved populations, and workers outside major technology centers so they receive training and opportunity, not only disruption.

7

Evaluate outcomes, not just adoption — Measure job quality, wage mobility, worker advancement, productivity, small-business competitiveness, safety, and access—not merely how many organizations purchased an AI tool.

Conclusion

AI itself is not the greatest workforce threat. The greater risk is allowing the technology to advance while workers, businesses, nonprofits, educators, and communities are left without the knowledge, protections, or support required to use it well.

America does not need to choose between innovation and responsibility. We can pursue both. We can help businesses compete while protecting workers. We can prepare students for AI-enabled careers while preserving the importance of human learning. We can encourage experimentation while requiring accountability. We can be optimistic about what AI makes possible and serious about the conditions required for those possibilities to benefit people broadly.

The future of work will not be predetermined by an algorithm. It will be shaped by the choices we make about who is educated, who is protected, who has access, who remains accountable, and who shares in the value that AI helps create.

Chairman Banks, Ranking Member Hickenlooper, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony and for your attention to the workers, employers, educators, and communities navigating this transition.

Respectfully submitted,



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