

**Prepared Statement of Ranking Member Richard Burr**  
**Supporting Quality Workforce Development Opportunities and Innovation to**  
**Address Barriers to Employment**

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February 15, 2022

Good morning, Chair Murray. I am glad we are having this hearing today.

Thank you to our witnesses for testifying. I am glad to see that we could have some of you join us in the hearing room.

We are here to talk about America's workforce.

This is an important topic. We are in a period of great economic uncertainty.

The pandemic has changed a lot about the ways we live and work.

Thanks to extravagant spending in Washington, American families are facing 40-year high inflation rates and paychecks are increasingly stretched to put food on the table and gas in the car. Plain and simple, this is a tax on the working class.

I'm looking forward to the discussion today to hear more about the ways we can support pathways to good-paying jobs.

With all of the changes to our economy, now more than ever is the time for us to think about innovative solutions.

Everyone here is interested in finding ways to reduce barriers to employment, but the Biden administration seems to be creating their own barriers to employment.

Look no further than the partisan nominees at the Department of Labor.

David Weil is the President's pick to lead the Wage and Hour Division.

This is a nominee with a track-record of stifling innovation and opposing growth opportunities.

His nomination is a threat to the gig economy, independent contracting, and the franchise model for businesses, of which many are minority or women-owned.

I can't imagine the threat of putting this type of leadership at the Department of Labor instills a lot of confidence in employers.

This administration also seems to be creating barriers to new training opportunities.

Something we should all be able to agree on is the importance of high-quality workforce training and education. This includes apprenticeships.

Instead of focusing on how to expand the apprenticeship model, building on what works, the Department of Labor is actually working on eliminating a pathway.

Industry-Recognized Apprenticeships are a promising way to expand the earn-and-learn model in new industries and to reach new populations of workers.

Instead of building on this innovative idea, or working with Republicans on how to improve it, this Administration paused the recognition process.

If we are going to address barriers to employment, we should be using all of the tools in our toolbox – not just the tools that labor unions find acceptable.

The White House also wants to put up roadblocks for people who want to work.

As businesses were adjusting to the pandemic, President Biden issued a vaccine mandate.

Make no mistake – I encourage every American, who is eligible, to get vaccinated and boosted against COVID. But amid labor shortages, supply chain issues, and an already strained workforce, this mandate is the last thing that was needed.

This sweeping new requirement far exceeded OSHA's legal authority, and the Supreme Court was right to block it.

We have to find solutions to keep people in their jobs, and schools, and businesses open.

I also think we can all agree that Americans can't work or go to school if they don't have safe and reliable child care for their family.

Instead of seeking workable, bipartisan solutions, Democrats tried to do it themselves in a reckless, partisan spending bill.

Only in Washington would the answer be to create even more complicated and disjointed programs rather than do the simplest thing – fund a program that works and that’s had bipartisan support for decades.

I’m talking about the Child Care and Development Block Grant.

Barbara Mikulski and I led the last reauthorization of this program in a bill that overwhelmingly passed the Senate and House with bipartisan support. We could do this again.

If we are going to find workable and lasting solutions, we must find them together.

Today’s topic has long been an area with support from both sides of the aisle.

I am looking forward to hearing from our witnesses today about how they are providing access to opportunity to workers in their communities.

This work doesn’t happen in silos. Collaboration among stakeholders is key.

This includes businesses, education providers, workers, and governments.

This collaboration is not always easy. I expect some of the barriers that we identify today will come from well-intentioned federal policy.

We have an opportunity to think outside-of-the-box and find ways to better support the innovative strategies we see at the state and local levels.

I thank the Chair.