

**YOUTH APPRENTICESHIPS: BUILDING
PARTNERSHIPS, STRENGTHENING
CAREER PATHWAYS**

HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE
SAFETY
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE
ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
SECOND SESSION
ON
EXAMINING YOUTH APPRENTICESHIPS, FOCUSING ON BUILDING
PARTNERSHIPS AND STRENGTHENING CAREER PATHWAYS

MARCH 12, 2024

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YOUTH APPRENTICESHIPS: BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS, STRENGTHENING CAREER PATHWAYS

Tuesday, March 12, 2024

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE SAFETY,
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS,
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2 p.m., in room 430, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. John Hickenlooper, Chairman of the Subcommittee, presiding.

Present: Senators Hickenlooper [presiding], Kaine, and Braun.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR HICKENLOOPER

Senator HICKENLOOPER. The Subcommittee on Employment and Workplace Safety will come to order.

Today, we are here for a hearing on youth apprenticeships, building partnerships, strengthening career pathways. Apprenticeships were one time a staple of America's workforce training. In many communities, they have become more of a well-kept secret. This is doubly true of youth apprenticeships.

What is not a secret is that employers are looking for quality candidates to fill their talent pipelines and that relying on college talent alone is not going to do the job. Not every student will or wants to attend a 4-year or a 2-year college.

The reality is that 52 percent of the people who recently graduated didn't complete—even if they attended, they didn't complete college. How can we make sure that our workplace solutions are meeting these students where they are, ensuring that they have skills that they need to succeed?

Apprenticeships, especially for those starting in high school, are a strong pathway for students to create a career. And they are a great way to help businesses form more sustainable workforce pipelines, which benefits employers and workers a lot. It can cost an employer close to \$5,000 to fill a job each time they have an opening if the recruits aren't trained.

Youth apprenticeships are a readily available pipeline of young, diverse talent, providing a positive return on investment for all manner of employers. In 2021, only 2.7 percent of youth apprentices were under the age of 18. All the rest were older.

This is a missed opportunity. It means that students are forced to wait until after high school to start building the skills they will

need to compete in what is already a challenging job market. But why should they wait?

We can bring high school students those opportunities right now. We have done this in Colorado, where we brought industry partners and education providers together to launch CareerWise.

Since that program start, CareerWise has seen more than 1,400 apprentices hired by more than 120 partnering employers in Colorado, India—Colorado, Indiana, Washington D.C., New York City, and others.

These programs serve as an important recruitment tool for employers, while also placing youth in quality, work based training opportunities that lead to career success and economic mobility.

The average hourly wage for youth apprenticeship graduates is nearly twice the national average hourly wage rate for youth—of the ages 16 to 24. These are good programs, ones we should be investing in.

I am proud to lead the Youth Apprenticeship Advancement Act, with Senator Braun here, that is going to do just that. The bill will provide competitive grant funding for youth apprenticeship programs across the country.

Even better, it is fully paid for. We believe that lifting up effective youth apprenticeship programs will also help to uplift the apprenticeship system as a whole for a whole new generation of workers. It is a rising tide that does indeed raise all boats.

In truth, the fact—the truth of the matter is we will need everyone to get this across the finish line, from employers, to schools, to intermediaries, to unions, to states, everyone. I think what we are going to do is make youth apprenticeships cool. They already are cool, but we are going to amplify that and shout it from the rooftops if we have to.

We hope that we can get moving on workforce development legislation this Congress. I think it is too important to wait. This hearing is an opportunity to hear from those in the field working on youth apprenticeships about how we can best support those efforts.

Today, we are going to hear from a dynamic witness panel that includes several of those youth apprenticeship partners. And with that, I am excited to introduce and welcome each of the witnesses we are joining—that are joining us today.

Steve Day is the Principal at the Cherry Creek Innovation Campus based in Centennial, Colorado. Steve brings with him more than 30 years of educational experience, having worked more than 13 years in the classroom and 17 years as a school administrator. And having toured that facility, I can say—I can attest to its excellence.

Wesley Patch is a Process Excellence Specialist for Vestas Americas in Windsor, Colorado. As a 16 year employee with the party—with the company, Mr. Patch has held many roles and he has also spearheaded designing and implementing the company's youth apprenticeship program, which we appreciate having that European influence.

Denise Tugade previously served as a member of California's Youth Apprenticeship Council in her former capacity as Govern-

ment relations advocate for SEUI, the United Healthcare Workers. In that role, Denise advised the Committee on best practices to advance youth apprenticeship in the health care sector.

Now, I am going to recognize Ranking Member Braun for his opening statement and to introduce our final witness, Brad Rhorer.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR BRAUN

Senator BRAUN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am going to go right into the introduction just to keep that flow going.

Mr. Brad Rhorer, who is a long time industry professional recognized in both the public sector and the manufacturing industry for his expertise in workforce development. And I have just got to tell the public that Indiana is a No. 1 manufacturing state per capita in the country.

It means a lot what you do. He recently joined Ascend Indiana in January 2024. We are happy to have him representing the Hoosier State here today. Thank you for being here. I ran a business for 37 years prior to coming here and come from one of the lowest unemployment counties and towns in our State of Indiana.

Happened to serve on our school board for 10 years, and apprenticeships, career and technical education, was very disappointed that when I looked into our own school system, it was definitely getting a second fiddle attention and approach.

In a place that had so much trouble hiring people, the system was actually not stigmatizing against it, but just wasn't working for it to give the full spectrum back then to parents and kids of what might be available.

Expanding opportunities and access to apprenticeships and other skills and training programs are important because in Indiana, back when I was in the Legislature for 3 years, we gave it a lot of different disaggregated approaches, spending almost with apprenticeships and career and technical education \$1 billion in a state like ours and not hitting the mark.

It is interesting how this has now come full circle where you are getting support from manufacturers, unions, across the board, and you can take some hint from what other successful countries are doing as well. Last year, Chairman Hickenlooper and I introduced legislation to promote and expand youth apprenticeships.

This bill, which specifically defines and targets youth apprenticeships for individuals between 16 and 22 years of age, is an important step to provide eligible employees entities the support they need to give critical career pathways for aspiring young workers.

Unlike other initiatives that address apprenticeships, this does not discriminate against industry recognized apprenticeship programs. So, we shouldn't have issues there. Which are just as effective in providing opportunities as registered apprenticeships are.

The bill also maintains a level playing field by not giving labor unions prioritization over other entities. And importantly, during these dire economic times, the bill is fiscally responsible, that hardly ever happens in this place, containing a paid for to support the competitive grant program that it authorizes and sunsets after a 5-year window.

We should be doing the rest of Government like that. We wouldn't be in the deep hole we are in currently. This legislation is only part of the hearing. We also want to hear from all of you in terms of what is working in and around the youth apprenticeship bill, and your suggestions for what lawmakers can do to better support the goals.

Today, we will hear about the value that youth apprenticeships have to both young workers seeking opportunities that can lead to rewarding lifelong careers, and employees seeking hard working, talented professionals that can help their businesses grow and prosper. I would like to make sure that it is an open conversation.

We are looking forward to hearing what you guys think. Thank you for being here. I yield back.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Great. Thank you, Senator Braun. Senator Kaine, I see you arrived. I don't know what your schedule is like.

Senator KAINE. I am not rushing.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. You are not rushing? All right. Then I will do my—I will do questions first, and we will go to Senator Braun and then Senator, to you. Oh, yes, first—what am I saying about questioning.

We will start, will give your—have your statements and then we will do all the questions. So, I apologize for that. Thank you. Mr. Day, why don't you start?

**STATEMENT OF STEVE DAY, PRINCIPAL, CHERRY CREEK
INNOVATION CAMPUS, CENTENNIAL, CO**

Mr. DAY. Thank you. Senator. Good afternoon, Chair Hickenlooper, Ranking Member Braun, and Members of the Subcommittee.

My name is Steve Day, and I am the Principal of the Cherry Creek Innovation Campus, a part of the Cherry Creek School District, the fourth largest school district in the State of Colorado. It is an honor to be here today to provide support for this critically important legislation.

Senator Hickenlooper, as you alluded to, it was a privilege to give you a tour of the Innovation Campus at the start of our school year and to hear firsthand yours and Senator Braun's vision for apprenticeships and what they can mean for our communities and for our students.

At the Cherry Creek Innovation Campus, also known as the CCIC, we have the privilege of working with high school students at a critical time and juncture in their formation as young adults.

At a time in their lives when the present and the future feels uncertain, we get to be a part of putting the tools, knowledge, and skills in their hands to prepare them for a lifetime of success.

The CCIC is a unique high school setting, to say the least. Like many career technical education centers, students get to experience multiple different career pathways on our campus, earning high school credit, college credit, and industry certifications along the way.

While the mechanisms of that work are project based authentic learning, the pinnacle of the work is a moment when students can move from the classroom space and into the workplace through an apprenticeship.

That opportunity to formally step into the workplace as both a learner and an employee allows our students to build their identity as a successful machinist, a successful electrician, or a successful classroom teacher, just to name some examples.

However, for many students, the artificial barrier of age is significant, excluding them from the opportunities an apprenticeship brings for all of junior year and most of senior year of high school. What we see is the critical nature of this legislation is that it encourages and funds the partnerships where students can participate in an apprenticeship as soon as 16 years of age, a time when they are fully supported by their high school network of teachers and staff.

This legislation provides opportunities and the critically needed funding for school districts and employers to work together to build those apprenticeships, while high school support is at its strongest, creating a bridge to the workplace and to a career which can be forged into a lifelong and strong pathway or purpose for our youth.

Allow me to share some examples of current apprentices and students to highlight the positive impact this legislation can have on many others. Logan apprentices with Micron, an international company with strong local presence in Denver. Micron creates high performance production systems, assembly lines of high complexity and precision.

Logan has done so well with Micron already that he is a part of their offsite delivery and installation team of these high precision production lines, both locally and nationally. He is actually doing that work in Pennsylvania as I speak.

Jayden's story is one of a first year apprentice in a local union shop, Sturgeon Electric. Jayden used his strong high school foundation to launch his career and is now already reaching back to the high school students as mentor, and event judge, and a recruiter for future apprentices.

Ty is an apprentice with the Blind Institute, and in fact, is the first student in the Nation who is blind to go through their apprenticeship program. As a result of his work, Ty is now also industry certified with Salesforce.

This legislation gives us the important leverage we need to provide these kinds of opportunities, and many more, for all students, starting while they are still in high school, in an effort to set them up for a lifetime of high wage, high skill, and high demand employment. Most significantly, this legislation has the potential to create generational change, lifting students and families from poverty for this generation, the next, and possibly for good.

To quote our Director of Apprenticeship Success, Ashlin Montgomery, school staff support allows for a tremendous amount of social growth inside and outside of work. As students learn to socialize with workers of other generations, we support them in navi-

gating those spaces until they understand how to navigate them on their own.

As a part of our work to expand the CCIC campus within the next 2 years, I have had the good fortune of traveling the country, visiting campuses just like the CCIC. As a part of that journey, I have been impressed with the students of Arizona, Ohio, Florida, and Washington. Each and every one of them are ready for this kind of work.

Each and every one of them bring an impressive amount of dedication, determination, and talent to what they do. These students are ready to get into the workplace, to prove who they are to their community, to their families, and to themselves.

Again, on behalf of the Cherry Creek School District and the Cherry Creek Innovation Campus, I am honored to support this legislation and look forward to working with Members of the Subcommittee to bring these opportunities to more students and future apprentices across our entire great nation. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Day follows.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF STEVE DAY

Good afternoon.

Chair Hickenlooper, Ranking Member Braun, and Members of the Subcommittee, my name is Steve Day and I am the principal of the Cherry Creek Innovation Campus which is part of the Cherry Creek School District, the fourth largest school district in Colorado. It is an honor to be here today and provide support for this critically important legislation.

Senator Hickenlooper, it was a privilege to give you a tour of the Innovation Campus at the start of our school year and to hear firsthand your and Senator Braun's vision for apprenticeships and what that could mean for our communities and for our students.

At the Cherry Creek Innovation Campus, known as the CCIC, we have the privilege of working with high school students at a critical time and juncture in their formation as young adults. At a time in their lives when the present *and* the future feels uncertain, we get to be a part of putting the tools, knowledge, and skills in their hands to prepare them for a lifetime of success.

The CCIC is a unique high school setting, to say the least. Like many Career Technical Education centers, students get to experience multiple different career pathways on our campus earning high school credit, college credit, and industry certifications along the way.

While the mechanisms of this work are project-based authentic learning, the pinnacle of this work is the moment when students transfer from the classroom space to the *workplace* through an apprenticeship.

That opportunity to formally step into the workplace as *both a learner and as an employee* allows our students to build identity as a successful electrician, a successful classroom teacher, a successful machinist.

However, for many students, the artificial barrier of age is significant—excluding them from the opportunities an apprenticeship brings, often for all of junior year and most of senior year in high school.

What we see as the most critical nature of this legislation is that it encourages and funds the partnerships where students can participate in an apprenticeship as soon as 16 years of age, a time when they are fully supported by their high school network of teachers and staff. We all know the critical nature of supporting and guiding students in their social-emotional health during all stages of their educational journey.

This legislation provides opportunities and critically needed funding for school districts and employers to work together to build these apprenticeships while school support is at its strongest, creating a bridge to the workplace and to a career which can be forged into a lifelong and strong *pathway of purpose* for our youth.

Allow me to share some examples of current students to highlight the positive impact this legislation can have on so many others:

Logan apprentices with Mikron, an international company with a strong, local presence in Denver. Mikron creates high performance production systems, assembly lines, of high complexity and precision. Logan has done so well with Mikron that he is already a part of their offsite delivery and installation team of these high precision production lines both locally and nationally.

Jayden's story is one as a first-year apprentice in a local union shop, Sturgeon Electric. Jayden used his strong high school foundation to launch his career and now is already reaching back and supporting our current students as a mentor, an event judge, and a recruiter for future apprentices.

Ty is an apprentice with The Blind Institute and, in fact, is the first student in the Nation who is blind to go through their apprenticeship program. As a result of his work, Ty is now also industry certified with Salesforce.

This legislation gives us the important leverage we need to provide these kinds of opportunities for all students starting while they are still in high school, in an effort to set them up for a lifetime of high wage, high skill and high demand employment. Most significantly, this legislation has the potential to create generational change, lifting students and families from poverty for this generation, the next, and possibly for good.

To quote our Director of Apprenticeship Success, Ashlin Montgomery, "school staff support allows for a tremendous amount of social growth inside and outside of work. As students learn to socialize with adult workers of other generations, we support them in navigating those spaces until they understand how to navigate them on their own."

As a part of our work to expand the CCIC campus within the next 2 years, I've had the good fortune of traveling the country visiting campuses like the CCIC. As a part of that journey, I have been impressed with the students of Arizona, Washington, Ohio, and Florida. Each and every one of them are ready for this work. Each and every one of them are impressive in the amount of determination, dedication and talent that they bring.

These students are ready to get into the workplace to prove who they are to their community, to their families, and to themselves.

Again, on behalf of the Cherry Creek School District and the Cherry Creek Innovation Campus, I am honored to support this legislation and look forward to working with Members of this Subcommittee to bring these opportunities to more students and future apprentices across our entire great nation.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Thank you very much, Mr. Day.
Mr. Patch.

**STATEMENT OF JAMES WESLEY PATCH, PROCESS
EXCELLENCE SPECIALIST, VESTAS, WINDSOR, CO**

Mr. PATCH. Yes. Good afternoon, Chair Hickenlooper, Ranking Member Braun, and Members of the Subcommittee on Employment and Workplace Safety. Thank you for inviting me to testify and discuss with you about our apprenticeship program. My name is Wesley Patch.

I am currently the Process Excellence Specialist for Vestas America, a renewable wind generator manufacturing company located in Windsor, Colorado. I was fortunate to be on the team designing and implementing our youth apprenticeship program, which is one of the things I am most proud of.

The youth apprenticeship program was realized and began talks in the design in 2017. We saw an opportunity of an untouched pool of candidates in high school students. That is the start of discussions with Greeley Central High School, which is part of the Greeley Evan School District 6.

This was a perfect match for Vestas, and really central to provide students an opportunity to join the workforce through an apprenticeship program where they can learn the skills needed in advanced manufacturing on the job while earning a good wage. Advanced manufacturing companies in Northern Colorado are struggling to find enough skilled workers to hire in this competitive job market today.

In fact, there are two job openings for every currently available worker in Colorado. This is where the youth apprenticeship program becomes a valuable asset to train a skilled worker. The apprenticeship program, registered with the U.S. Department of Labor, is designed to support juniors in the summer before their senior year.

The apprenticeships are anywhere from 17 to 19 years old. This new apprentice works 40 hours a week during the summer, and this is the most critical time, as the best learning is done with repetition and consistency.

During their senior year, we allow up to 20 hours a week. They pick their own schedule based on the course load and their extra-curricular activities. Our first apprenticeship cohort class started in June 2018.

We have had 4 cohorts, which involved around 50 students, in this apprenticeship program over the 4 years. Since then, Vestas has partnered with CareerWise, which acts as an intermediary between the systems of education and industry, developing occupations and competencies, providing training frameworks, training staff in best practices for working with students and apprentices, and workplace preparedness.

To further expand the program, including hiring high school seniors in these programs, the apprentices must complete a total of 144 hours classroom training and 2,000 hours of on the job training. We anticipate hiring another 40 apprentices this spring semester.

Vestas, as part of the renewable energy space, has a bright future in the American market today, thanks to the bipartisan investments made during the recent clean energy transition. The act of supporting our growth and our investments in the communities we operate in now and ensure we will continue growing for a foreseeable future.

With this and the competitive job market in Colorado, youth apprenticeship programs become an essential talent strategy to tap into the labor pool that is underutilized today. Our first apprentice to complete all of the requirements for the apprenticeship program was a student named Raquel. She started the program as a junior in high school, worked through her senior year, and then was hired on full time with Vestas after graduation.

Rachelle—Raquel, sorry, finished her 2,000th working hour in Denmark on a temporary 8 week assignment, assisting another factory in training new employees. Upon her return to Vestas—upon her return to Windsor, Raquel took advantage of our tuition reimbursement program and is currently finishing her second year of college to gain her engineering degree.

Vestas's registered youth apprenticeship program has been a great change to our business. These young apprentices bring fresh ideas, energy, and willingness to learn everything they can. They have helped us start a mentorship program, streamline processes, improve productivity, and even come up with innovative solutions to challenges. It has been incredibly fulfilling to see them grow and develop their skills.

Overall, youth apprenticeships has a huge impact on Vestas and the surrounding community. If the Youth Apprenticeship Advancement Act is passed, it will allow more businesses to give opportunities to our youth to be paid to learn and gain knowledge for better, stronger skilled workforce in the future.

Youth apprenticeships is an investment in the company's workforce and one of—that has a guaranteed return, if you structure your program well and commit the resources. The cost comes from training, added headcount for mentors and trainers, and overhead of the new program.

You could continue investing your youth apprenticeships and youth apprenticeship intermediaries, make reporting and registration processes simpler for employers and schools, and make high schools more flexible to allow more students to fit apprentices in their school schedules.

Vestas chose to start this program, as we could see the benefit in hiring a new, diverse, and talented youth of today. It has shown us that the potential of a skilled workforce if you give the youth of today a chance to become successful. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Patch follows.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JAMES WESLEY PATCH

Good afternoon, Chair Hickenlooper, Ranking Member Braun, and Members of the Subcommittee on Employment and Workplace Safety. Thank you for inviting me to testify and discuss with you about our youth apprenticeship program. My name is Wesley Patch, I am currently the process excellence specialist for Vestas Americas, a renewable wind generator manufacturing company located in Windsor, Colorado. In my 16 years with Vestas, I have been fortunate to hold many different roles as well as be on the team designing and implementing our youth apprenticeship program, which is one of the things I'm most proud of.

The youth apprenticeship program was realized and began talks of design in 2017 as we were introducing a new product into the factory and were starting to hire for a production ramp. We saw an opportunity of an untouched pool of candidates in high school students that were not headed to college and their options were military or join the workforce. These students were attempting to gain employment with very little work experience or knowledge.

Vestas started discussions with Greeley Central High School from Greeley Evans School District 6. There was big push at that time by the local school district to get their students career and/or college ready. This was a perfect match for Vestas and Greeley Central to provide students with an opportunity to joining the workforce through an apprenticeship program where they can learn the skills needed in advanced manufacturing on the job, while earning a good wage.

Advanced Manufacturing companies in Northern Colorado are struggling to find enough skilled workers to hire in this competitive job market today. In fact, there are two job openings for every currently available worker in Colorado. This is where the youth apprenticeship program becomes a valuable asset for providing training, mentoring and allowing the youth of today's world an opportunity to gain business knowledge, earn a good wage and become good members of our community, starting in high school.

Our Apprenticeship Program

The Apprenticeship Program registered, with the U.S. department of labor, is designed to support juniors in the summer before their senior year. The apprenticeship opportunity is for 17 years, or older young people and we have them treat this as if they are applying for a job, with resume, interview, and feedback. We bring the team in as a cohort, put them through our new employee orientation, and assign them a mentor. Their mentor is with them throughout their initial 12-month journey. The new apprentice works 40 hours a week during the summer, and this is the most critical time as the best learning is done with repetition and consistency. Once the summer is over and they are back to attending school for their senior year we will allow up to 20 hours a week, they pick their schedule based on their course load and extracurriculars. Attending and completing school with a diploma or equivalent is part of our apprenticeship requirements for them to continue working with us after their apprenticeship program.

Our first apprenticeship cohort class started in June 2018 we have had four cohorts which involved 50 students in the apprenticeship program over the 4-years. Since then, Vestas has partnered with CareerWise which acts as an intermediary between the systems of education and industry, developing occupations and competencies, providing training frameworks, training staff in best-practices for working with students and apprentices in workplace preparedness, to further expand the program including hiring high school Seniors. In these programs, the apprentices must complete a total of 144 hours of classroom training and 2000 hours of on-the-job training. We anticipate hiring another 40 apprentices this Spring semester.

Vestas, as part of the renewable energy space, has a bright future in the American market thanks to the bipartisan investments made during the recent clean energy transition. This act is supporting our growth and our investments in the communities we operate in now and ensures we will continue growing for the foreseeable future. With this and the competitive job market in Colorado, youth apprenticeship programs become an essential talent strategy to tap into a labor pool that is underutilized today.

Vestas has many career paths for the apprentices, paths into leadership, maintenance, quality and technical support engineers and logistics. Vestas has a tuition reimbursement program for all employees, and this works well for the apprentices as once they are hired on full time with Vestas, they can take advantage of this benefit. Not only does the apprentice gain the knowledge and skills needed in the advanced manufacturing industry, but they can also earn a degree on whichever path they choose, this is not only an alternative to college, but can be an alternative path through college.

Our first apprentice to complete all the requirements for the apprenticeship program, was a student name Raquel. She started the program as a junior in high school, worked throughout her senior year and was hired on full time with Vestas after graduation. Raquel finished her 2000th working hour in Nakskov, Denmark, on a temporary 8-week assignment assisting another factory in training new employees. Upon her return to Windsor, Raquel took advantage of our tuition reimbursement program and is currently finishing her second year of college to gain her engineering degree. Raquel currently is a trainer on the night shift and is putting her apprenticeship skills she learned with her mentor to work by mentoring newly hired employees.

Vestas's registered youth apprenticeship program has been a great change to our business. These young apprentices bring fresh ideas, energy, and a willingness to learn everything they can. They've helped us start a mentorship program, streamline processes, improve productivity, and even come up with innovative solutions to challenges. It has been incredibly fulfilling to see them grow and develop their skills. Overall, youth apprenticeship has had a huge impact on Vestas and the surrounding community.

Vestas saw an opportunity to tap into a labor pool that was being unnoticed at the time. It took around a year to get the apprenticeship program designed and rolled out in both the factory and school district. If The Youth Apprenticeship Advancement Act is passed it will allow more businesses to give opportunities for our youth to be paid to learn and gain knowledge for a better stronger skilled workforce in the future.

I attend roundtable meetings with other advance manufacturing businesses in Northern Colorado to discuss apprenticeship programs and the need for these. Their tentativeness of starting an apprenticeship program is due to cost and effort to putting a program together. The cost is real, but it is an investment in the company's

workforce and one that has a guaranteed return if you structure your program well and commit the resources. The cost comes from training, added headcount for mentors and trainers, and overhead of a new program. If you could continue investing in youth apprenticeships and youth apprenticeship intermediaries, make reporting and registration processes simpler for employers and schools, and make high school more flexible to allow more students to fit apprentices in their school schedules, this would help more employers take advantage of this great talent strategy and ensure more young people have access to great jobs.

Vestas chose to start the program as we could see the benefit in hiring a new diverse and talented youth of today. It has shown us the potential of a skilled workforce if you give the youth of today a chance to become successful. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I look forward to answering your questions.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Thank you, Mr. Patch.
Mr. Rhorer.

**STATEMENT OF BRAD RHORER, PRESIDENT, CEO, ASCEND
INDIANA, INDIANAPOLIS, IN**

Mr. RHORER. Good afternoon. Chairman Hickenlooper, Senator, Ranking Member Braun, and Committee Members. I am Brad Rhorer. I am the President and CEO of Ascend Indiana, a state-wide initiative focused on ensuring Indiana employers have the talent needed to thrive and every Indiana citizen has the opportunity to pursue a meaningful career.

Talent development is personal to me not only as a representative of Ascend, Indiana, but as a 25 year automotive manufacturing professional who spent a good portion of my career creating talent pathways from one of Indiana's largest manufacturers. Indiana is not unlike any other state in the Nation facing a persistent talent shortfall.

Hoosier leaders are all too familiar with the data, a concerning statewide labor participation rate hovering at 64 percent, an alarming 75 percent of Indiana employers who cannot find enough qualified candidates to fill open positions, an aging workforce population looking for retirement, and a strained talent pipeline that only worsened during the pandemic. Indiana, however, is among a few states in the Nation actively scaling up a proven solution, youth apprenticeships.

Indiana has established a coalition of stakeholders from philanthropic organizations, chambers, education, industry, and the public sector to design and implement youth apprenticeships across the state in order to prepare more high school students for in-demand careers making up today's workforce.

Our goal is to scale apprenticeship programs statewide to ensure every student has access to high quality education and training options by 2030. Indiana leaders began learning about Switzerland's dual vocational education and training, or VET system, in 2016 through a convening led by the bipartisan National Conference of State Legislators and funded by the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation.

Switzerland's system is considered the gold standard for educating youth or young people and meeting labor market demand, with about 70 percent of Swiss youth participating in 3 or 4 year paid apprenticeships spanning the entire labor market, totaling 180,000 people ages 16 to 19.

Drawing from the best practices of VET system, in 2019, Indiana collaboratively developed and began implementing a youth apprenticeship system through the launch of a pilot program called Modern Youth Apprenticeship, the creation of a statewide community practice to remove barriers in implementing and scaling these programs.

Indiana's youth apprenticeship programs begin in 11th grade and average 3 years, with students earning a high school diploma, college credit, and industry credentials upon completion.

The 3 year—three year round paid experience spanned many industries including insurance, business services, life sciences, health care, and advanced manufacturing. Today, five pilot programs are operating and have placed more than 400 students with 50 more employers—or 50 employers, with five more pilot programs anticipated to launch by 2025.

Finally, the statewide COP, or community practice engaged 125 members across 60 organizations to continue to discuss how to scale apprenticeships in Indiana. Through the youth apprenticeship pilot programs, Indiana leaders identified common implementation challenges. Businesses view youth apprenticeship as a social responsibility and not as a pipeline development for recruitment, development, and retention.

Youth apprenticeships are layered into an existing school conference or coursework, making it difficult for students to have consistent, dedicated work hours at an employer site. Communities lack reliable transportation for solutions entering the workplace.

High schools have limited career counseling capabilities, and there is also a lack of identified competencies through industry and other employers to ensure consistency and experiences, ultimately of the ability to scale.

As Hoosiers, we always come together, collectively solve challenges, and map out the best practices for the future. This is how we do things in Indiana. To scale youth apprenticeship programs statewide, Indiana is well on its way.

We have collectively identified short term priorities, such as establishing a governing committee to oversee strategic planning, implementation, and sustainability, and operational structure that delineates the roles of private, public, and nonprofit partners.

Another priority is to identify policies that hamper scaling youth apprenticeship and to address barriers. One significant step that was taken in 2023 by the Indiana General Assembly was to—that identified modern apprenticeship in requiring two semesters of academic instruction, 650 hours of work, a paid experience, post-secondary credits, and potential credential attainment.

This enables consistency of programs, and it starts to ensure a bar of quality. It is important that all youth nationwide have access to apprenticeship programs. Indiana Coalition has significant progress to give youth equal access to careers and businesses access to skilled talent, but to scale apprenticeship here in Indiana and nationwide, the Coalition believes the youth apprenticeship needs a system—needs additional systems as a framework and definition of the youth apprenticeship employee-led models, and easy

access for employers and students to find funding for wraparound services, including transportation.

Thank you for the opportunity to share the journey of Indiana and its Coalition, and I hope the experience and our progress provides you with information to find ways to make youth apprenticeship available to students and businesses across the Nation. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Rhorer follows.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BRAD RHORER

Good afternoon and thank you for inviting me to speak to you about youth apprenticeships today. My name is Brad Rhorer, and I am President and CEO of Ascend Indiana, a statewide initiative focused on ensuring Indiana employers have the talent needed to thrive and every Indiana citizen has the opportunity to pursue a meaningful career.

Talent development is personal to me not only as a representative of Ascend Indiana, but as a 25-year automotive manufacturing professional who has spent a good portion of my career creating talent pathways for one of Indiana's largest manufacturers.

Indiana is not unlike any other state in the Nation facing a persistent talent shortfall. Hoosier leaders are all too familiar with the data: a concerning statewide labor force participation rate hovering at 64 percent, an alarming 75 percent of Indiana employers who cannot find enough qualified candidates to fill open positions, an aging population preparing for retirement, and a strained talent pipeline that only worsened during the pandemic.

Indiana, however, is among the few states in the Nation actively scaling up a proven solution: youth apprenticeships. Indiana has established a coalition of stakeholders from philanthropic organizations, chambers, education, industry and the public sector to design and implement youth apprenticeships across the state in order to prepare more high school students for in-demand careers making up today's workforce. Our goal is to scale apprenticeship programs statewide to ensure every student has access to high-quality education and training options by 2030.

Indiana leaders began learning about Switzerland's dual vocational education and training (VET) system in 2016 through convenings led by the bipartisan National Conference of State Legislatures and funded by the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation. Switzerland's system is considered the "gold standard" for educating young people and meeting labor market demand, with about 70 percent of Swiss youth participating in a 3- or 4-year paid apprenticeship spanning the entire labor market, totaling about 180,000 people ages 16 to 19.

Drawing on the best practices from the Swiss VET system, in 2019 Indiana collaboratively developed a plan to begin implementing a youth apprenticeship system through the launch of pilot modern youth apprenticeship programs and the creation of a statewide Community of Practice (COP) to remove barriers to implementing and scaling these programs.

Indiana's youth apprenticeship programs begin in 11th grade and average 3 years with students earning a high school diploma, college credit and an industry credential upon completion. These year-round, paid employment experiences span many industries, including insurance, business services, life sciences, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing. Today, five pilot programs are operating and have placed more than 400 students with more than 50 employers. There are five more pilot programs that are currently in the planning phase with the support of Ascend Indiana and have plans to launch in 2025. Finally, the statewide COP engages 125 members across 60 organizations to continue to discuss how Indiana can scale youth apprenticeship opportunities in Indiana.

Through the youth apprenticeship pilot programs, Indiana leaders have identified common implementation challenges:

- Businesses view youth apprenticeship as corporate social responsibility instead of a core component of the employer's talent recruitment, development, and retention strategies,
- Youth apprenticeships are layered on top of existing high school coursework, making it difficult for students to have consistent, dedicated work hours at the employer site,

- Communities lack reliable transportation solutions for students to travel to workplaces,
- High schools have limited career counseling capacity, impeding awareness of the variety of career pathways available in Indiana, and
- A lack of industry-defined competencies that are developed by employers and enable consistency of experiences and, ultimately, the ability to scale.

As Hoosiers, we always come together, collectively solve challenges and map out the best path forward. That's just how we do things in Indiana. To scale youth apprenticeship programs statewide, Indiana is well on its way. We have collectively identified short-term priorities such as establishing a governing committee to oversee strategic planning, implementation, and sustainability and an operational structure that delineates the roles of private, public, and nonprofit partners. Another priority is to identify policies that hamper scaling youth apprenticeships and to address barriers.

One significant step that was taken in 2023 by the Indiana General Assembly was legislation that defined Modern Youth Apprenticeship and requires two semesters of academic instruction, 650 work hours, paid experience, postsecondary credits and potential credential attainment. This enables consistency of program implementation, and it starts to ensure a bar for quality.

It's important that all youth—nationwide—have access to apprenticeships. Indiana's coalition has made significant progress to give youth equal access to career opportunities and businesses access to skilled talent. But, to scale apprenticeships here in Indiana—and nationwide—the coalition believes the youth apprenticeship system needs:

- (1). A framework and definition of youth apprenticeship that is output oriented. It is vital that the framework allows for flexibility in program design to meet community needs.
- (2). An employer-led model. Youth apprenticeships need to be defined at a high level, so employers are clear about their role in the ecosystem. This allows them to best identify where to invest and develop capacity. Additionally, industry associations need to engage and provide input on the development of an occupation. Funding from the Federal Government could help states define occupation mapping at a state-level.
- (3). Easy access for employers and students. This includes funding that supports career advising services and the delivery of those services through multiple channels, transportation, wrap-around services and building capacity with intermediaries to help students and employers navigate the system.

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you the journey Indiana is taking with its coalition. I hope our experience—and our progress—provides you with the information needed to find ways to make youth apprenticeship programs available to students and businesses across the Nation.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Thank you, Mr. Rhorer.

Ms. Tugade.

STATEMENT OF DENISE TUGADE, FORMER MEMBER, CALIFORNIA YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP COUNCIL, LOS ANGELES, CA

Ms. TUGADE. Thank you. Chair Hickenlooper, Ranking Member Braun, and Members of the Subcommittee, my name is Denise Tugade. I recently served on the California Youth Apprenticeship Committee, as well as on the California Interagency Committee on Apprenticeship Health Subcommittee.

I previously was a Government relations advocate for SEIU United Healthcare Workers, although today I am speaking in my capacity as an individual with expertise in workforce and labor policy. The union apprenticeship model has long been an established, successful path for workers to gain skills on the job, allowing for

workers to quickly integrate into the field, both connections in the industry, and allow apprentices to be paid while receiving their training to critical earn and learn.

Since 1948, youth unemployment rates have averaged around 2.7 times higher than the prime age unemployment rate. A Brookings memo estimated that the impact of just 6 months of unemployment at age 22 could reduce the individual's wages in the following year by 8 percent and reduce future earnings by about \$22,000 over the following decade. Notably, this impact is not evenly distributed across all youth.

The long term economic losses or scarring were more severe for youth from historically marginalized communities, and particularly from youth not pursuing post-secondary education. This trend of a widening opportunity gap appears to be holding today.

Given the dramatic and long lasting impacts of youth unemployment, we must look to solutions that meet this unique population where they are. Senator Maria Elena Durazo of Los Angeles introduced Senate Bill 1351, the California Youth Apprenticeship Program in 2022.

As Chair of the Senate Budget Subcommittee 5 overseeing California's labor and workforce development budget items, she established the California Youth Apprenticeship Program to provide grants for existing, shovel ready programs and the development of new apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs.

Critically, the bill defined its target population as youth who are at risk of disconnection or are disconnected from the education system or employment, unhoused, in the child welfare, juvenile justice, or criminal legal systems, living in concentrated poverty, or are facing barriers to labor market participation.

It was also inclusive of youth who are facing chronic opportunity educational achievement gaps, attend schools in communities of concentrated poverty, or attend high schools with a negative school climate.

Importantly, the program will collect, analyze, and report data on race, gender, income, rurality ability, foster youth, homeless youth, and English learner language—language learner, excuse me, among other key characteristics, keeping programs accountable and giving us better insight into what is and is not working.

Under the statute, the California Youth Apprenticeship Committee was charged with developing recommendations on the expansion and structure of youth apprenticeships, establishing definitions and guiding principles for the California Opportunity Youth Apprenticeship Grant.

The committee includes representatives from youth, youth serving organizations, labor, employers of youth, K through 12 schools, community colleges, and the public workforce system. Having each of these pieces of the puzzle all together has been absolutely critical to getting the program moving.

The first round of applications for funding opened in February, with projects estimated to start by July of this year. The committee has analyzed extensive surveys of youth apprenticeship models, with the intention of presenting a report of findings in July.

In August 2023, our Governor, Gavin Newsom, issued an Executive Order to improve high paying—access to high paying jobs and fulfilling careers, reduce barriers to employment in state jobs, and to launch a new master plan on career education.

The championship of his administration, as well as our agencies, has made all the difference in keeping momentum going forward. In the course of surveying models across the country, a theme which rose to the top was that youth are at a stage of exploring interests. Many youth do not know what they want to do as a career, or their ideas may change about what they want to do.

The most promising models for youth apprenticeship allowed them to experience work based learning, while not pigeonholing them into a single profession or trade, by ensuring that youth completed their programs not only with transferable skills, but with portable and stackable credentials that could propel them forward along branching career pathways.

In order for this model to work, youth apprenticeship requires, again, extensive coordination. The 2,000 hours minimum requirement typical for registered apprenticeships is challenging to complete on top of current high school graduation requirements, simply due to the limits on hours in the day, as we have said.

Additionally, youth face unique barriers like consistency of transportation and the need for supplemental trainings on professionalism and being worksite or office ready. In closing, I will say, the Committee's consideration of the Youth Apprenticeship Advancement Act could take the following lessons from our successful implementation in California.

Having all of the stakeholders, youth serving organizations, labor, employers of youth, K–12, community colleges, and intermediaries at the table together, much like today, can help bring down red tape to get to creative solutions.

Organized labor often is ready with the infrastructure to recruit from target populations and provide the critical wraparound services that can help apprentices complete a program. Working with labor ensures that we are not reinventing the wheel.

Having the full voice support of both Administration and Legislative champions across geographies and across policy sectors has made it possible to jump over hurdles when they have come in the way.

Finally, this is a model that can be thoughtfully tailored to serve a group which our institutions have long failed. The lives of these—this is an incredible opportunity to change the lives of these youth and their families, and to transform entire communities. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Tugade follows.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DENISE TUGADE

Youth Apprenticeship: A Worker Advocate Perspective

The union apprenticeship model has long been an established successful path for workers to learn skills on-the-job, allowing for workers to quickly integrate into the field, build connections in the industry, and allowing the apprentice to earn money rather than go into debt during the training process. At a time when higher education debt is skyrocketing and youth unemployment rates remain stubbornly high,

youth apprenticeship adds another tool to the toolbox of options to help build a more prosperous economy for all Americans.

Background

The high youth unemployment rate is a longstanding issue with long term consequences. A 2014 Brookings memo by Isabel Sawhill and Quentin Karpilow took a longitudinal look in *Youth Unemployment Is a Problem for Social Mobility*. Sawhill and Karpilow found that from 1948 through 2014 at the time of publishing, youth unemployment rates averaged around 2.7 times higher than the prime-age unemployment rate (25–54 years). This ratio tended to fluctuate in tandem with business cycles, particularly in economic downturns. Sawhill and Karpilow estimated the individual impact of a 6-month period of unemployment at age 22 to reduce the following year’s wages by 8 percent, and to reduce future earnings by about \$22,000 over the following decade. In looking to explain these lost earnings, the memo pointed to “lost work experience, depreciating labor market skills, and the negative signals that unemployment sends to employers.”¹ Notably, this impact is not evenly distributed across all youth. The long term economic losses, deemed “scarring,” were more severe for youth from what the Brookings memo referred to as “disadvantaged populations” and particularly for youth not pursuing post-secondary education. This trend of a widening opportunity gap appears to be holding.

As of July 2023, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) numbers place current youth unemployment at 8.7 percent, with little change from 2022.² By comparison, the prime-age unemployment rate from 2023 through February 2024 has hovered between 3.0 and 3.3 percent.³ When stratified by gender, the unemployment rates for young men was 9.2 percent and women was 8.2 percent. When stratified for race/ethnicity, the rates broke down to White at 7.0 percent, Black at 18.0 percent, and Hispanic at 10.5 percent, all substantially similar to the year prior. The young Asian unemployment rate was the only rate which was lower than the previous year, at 5.6 percent, however, this data is not disaggregated to account for the wide variations across the ethnicities captured by Asian American Pacific Islander Native Hawaiian (AAPINH).⁴

Senator Maria Elena Durazo introduced Senate Bill 1351, the California Youth Apprenticeship Program, in 2022. She was Chair of Senate Budget Subcommittee 5 overseeing California’s labor and workforce development budget items. As Subcommittee Chair, she established the California Youth Apprenticeship Program and secured \$20 million in 2022–2023, \$20 million in 2023–24, and \$25 million in 2024–25 to support the program for a total of \$65 million.⁵

The program is administered by the California Department of Industrial Relations Division of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS), with the charge of awarding grants for the purpose of providing funding for existing apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs or to develop new apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs to serve the target population and satisfy the goals and objectives of the grant program. Critically, the bill defined “target population” as individuals from 16 to 24 years of age who are at risk of disconnection or are disconnected from the education system or employment, unhoused, in the child welfare, juvenile justice, or criminal legal systems, living in concentrated poverty, or are facing barriers to labor market participation. “Target population” is also inclusive of youth who face chronic opportunity educational achievement gaps, attend schools in communities of concentrated poverty, or attend high schools with a negative school climate. Importantly, the program will collect, analyze, and report data on race, gender, income, rurality, ability, foster youth, homeless youth, English language learner, and other key characteristics.

¹ Sawhill, Isabel V. and Quentin Karpilow. *Youth Unemployment Is a Problem for Social Mobility*. The Brookings Institution. 5 March 2014. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/youth-unemployment-is-a-problem-for-social-mobility/>.

² Economic New Release: Employment and Unemployment Among Youth Summary. 16 August 2023. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/youth.nr0.htm>.

³ Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey: A–10. Unemployment rates by age, sex, and marital status, seasonally adjusted. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 8 March 2024. <https://www.bls.gov/web/empsit/cpseea10.htm>.

⁴ Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey: Data about Asians. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 1 September 2023. <https://www.bls.gov/cps/demographics/asians.htm>.

⁵ SB 191 Excerpts. California Department of Industrial Relations Division of Apprenticeship Standards. <https://www.dir.ca.gov/DAS/DAS-MeetingAgenda/2023/February/SB-191-Excerpts.pdf>.

DAS convened the California Youth Apprenticeship Committee (CYAC) to develop recommendations to the division on the expansion of youth apprenticeships in California. The committee was charged with establishing definitions of youth apprenticeship and high school apprenticeships, guiding principles in the California Opportunity Youth Apprenticeship (COYA) Grant, and providing insights on the structure of the state's work to expand youth apprenticeship. The committee includes representatives from youth, youth serving organizations, labor, employers of youth, K–12 schools, community colleges, and the public workforce system. The first round of applications for funding for the California Opportunity Youth Apprenticeship (COYA) Grant opened in February, with projects estimated to start by July of this year.⁶ The committee has analyzed extensive surveys of youth apprenticeship models with the intention of presenting a report of findings by July.

In August 2023, California Governor Gavin Newsom issued an Executive Order to improve access to high-paying and fulfilling careers for students and workers, reduce barriers to employment in state jobs, and launch the creation of a new Master Plan on Career Education.⁷

Findings and Recommendations

In the course of surveying models across the country and internationally, a theme which rose to the top was that youth are at a stage where exploration of interests is important. Many youth do not know what they want to do as a career, or their ideas may change as they gain experience or find out about opportunities. The most promising models for youth apprenticeship allowed youth to experience the work based learning while not pigeonholing them into a single profession or trade by ensuring that youth completed their programs not only with transferable skills but with portable and stackable credentials that can propel youth forward along branching career pathways. For example, a youth apprentice may complete a program around community health work with the intention of following a nursing pathway, but may find that rather than continuing down this path, is better suited for a role focused on behavioral health, or may be able to take this biological life sciences credential and move into lab work.⁸

In order for this model to work, youth apprenticeship requires extensive coordination among educators, labor, employers, and intermediaries. The 2000 hour minimum requirement typical for registered apprenticeships is challenging to complete on top of additionally, youth face unique barriers like consistency of transportation. Current high school graduation requirements simply due to the limits on hours in the day. Successful examples of youth apprenticeship combined flexibility on the part of the employer with school credits and accommodations for workload, as well as union and intermediary supportive services and mentorship.

As with pre-apprenticeship, it is vital that youth apprenticeships are connected with registered apprenticeship programs. Key performance indicators in the traditional pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship model like retention and matriculation from the program to employment or to apprenticeship can also be telling of the success of youth apprenticeship, however should be adjusted specifically for youth apprenticeship. For example, some models for youth apprenticeship which did not have formal connections to registered apprenticeship had outcomes where few if any who completed the program went on to a registered apprenticeship. The pattern of data suggested that these participants went on to post-secondary education. This outcome, in and of itself, is not negative, however, it does suggest that the population that was served may not have been the target population which could benefit most from youth apprenticeship. Organized labor often is ready with the infrastructure to recruit from target populations and provide the critical wraparound services that can help apprentices complete a program.

Youth apprenticeship is not a silver bullet to workforce supply and unemployment issues, but in combination with the many paths to good, thriving wage jobs, can be a critical link for youth who may have otherwise fallen through the cracks.

⁶ California Opportunity Youth Apprenticeship Grant (COYA). California Department of Industrial Relations Division of Apprenticeship Standards. <https://www.dir.ca.gov/DAS/Grants/California-Youth-Apprenticeship-Grant.html>.

⁷ Executive Order N–11–23. Executive Department State of California. <https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/8.31.23-Career-Education-Executive-Order.pdf> Freedom to Succeed: Governor Newsom Launches New Effort To Prepare Students and Workers for High-Paying Careers. <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2023/08/31/freedom-to-succeed/>.

⁸ Barriers and Recommendations to Facilitating Earn and Learn Training Programs in Allied Health Professions. California Department of Consumer Affairs. <https://www.dca.ca.gov/publications/ab2105.pdf>.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Thank you, Ms. Tugade. Terrific. And again, I appreciate you all making the time and the effort to be here. Let me start, Mr. Day, with you.

The Cherry Creek Innovation Campus has taken a—really a full scale approach to youth apprenticeship since 2019.

How has this full embrace of youth apprenticeship as a model, co-hosted with the—within the school, benefited both your school and the surrounding community?

Mr. DAY. Thank you, Senator. That benefit has come in multiple different formats. So, I can say, in terms of employment, we have—you use the figure of \$5,000 as cited in terms of cost for replacing an employee.

We have heard from our construction partners in the construction trades specific to our area that we have a savings of \$15,000 in terms of employee training when they exit our programs and move into their career with these employees or these employee partners.

We have benefited by that in multiple different ways in terms of strengthening that partnership by providing these employees. We have the training of professional skills that we do at the CCIC, which also then benefits not only our students, obviously, but also the employer in terms of the strength of their employee.

Then, those partnerships show up in multiple different forms of support for our campus. And I would say, one way to kind of tackle the structure of some of these challenges is we have students who will enroll with us for three full years, two full years of instruction in the classroom, and then we use their third year with us, their senior year, as the beginning of their apprenticeship, specifically in the construction trades, is just one example.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. [Technical problems]—oops, thank you very much. Ms. Tugade, one of the main reasons we are so passionate about this model of advancing youth apprenticeship is the way that it will help bring apprenticeship opportunities to a whole new generation of Americans.

Unions have a strong history of advancing apprenticeship and continue to be strong partners as we work toward—as we work to support youth apprenticeships. But the fact is that most, well advancing youth apprenticeships is going to require diverse stakeholder support across the board.

Given your background, can you discuss a little bit about how we make sure to include unions in youth apprenticeship partnerships? Ultimately, how that strengthens the program?

Ms. TUGADE. Absolutely. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, again, I think bringing everyone to the table just like today is so important, regardless of we may not always agree on every single issue, but on this, on making sure that we are getting our youth into the workforce, I think this is something we can all agree on.

The how, of course, is the tricky part. We found that in California, one of the best ways to go about it is to really look at where the need is. So, my previous employer was in the health care field, and so of course, there is always a need.

We are in a severe shortage. In California, we were looking at 500,000 short, for allied health care workers. And a lot of those are really good paying jobs that do not require a college education.

May not even require a high school education. You just need a certificate. And so, how do we get folks into those jobs? And so, really, meeting with employers and then, again, kind of getting to that point of how do we get to where we are both interested parties.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Great. Exactly the point. Mr. Patch, Vestas has been an employer partner for now, what, 6 years, going on 6 years, and obviously clearly ramping this up. How would legislation like the Youth Apprenticeship Advancement Act help existing programs like yours to kind of grow in to serve more apprentices?

Mr. PATCH. Yes, it would help with really the overhead cost of trainers and mentors. It would help with the training materials. It would help with recruiting. It would help with the intermediary consultants helping us get students into our program.

It would help schools themselves be able to recruit students in their school districts. It would also help us with understanding of projecting out to the public with advertising, marketing, and assisting so that people are aware of it.

Right, I mean people understand apprenticeship programs, but they are not really aware of what really an apprenticeship program does. So, if this is passed, then it lets the whole world know that we are really serious here and we are going to go after the apprenticeships.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Certainly, that is part of the goal here, is to make sure that when people in America hear the word apprenticeship, they think, wow, opportunity rather than, well, maybe I should be going to college.

The apprenticeships are their own choice. And you are exactly right, we are changing the way people hear just the word. They called a vote, so I am going to turn the Chair over to Senator Braun, my Co-Chair of this thing, and let him take it from here, and recognize Senator Kaine. And I will be back briefly.

Senator BRAUN. Before you leave, I would like to submit for the record six letters from Ascend, Indiana and others in Indiana that have highlighted what we are doing there for apprenticeships. And I would like to get that into the record.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Without objection.

[The following information can be found on page 27 in Additional Material:]

Senator BRAUN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have several questions, Mr. Rhorer, and I got another set of them. We will try to get them in and then Senator Kaine will be up. I know what it means in Indiana, in terms of that idea of aspiring to go to college.

I remember too that there were cases where I think we were pushing kids only into that direction at the expense of—pre-COVID, I think we had 65,000 jobs in Indiana that needed apprenticeships, some form of better education in high school toward basic skills.

How have you seen in the past few years—are we getting elementary education involved at all, in the middle school and especially in high school, to where these options are there for parents and kids to look at? Has the dynamic changed?

Mr. RHORER. Thank you for that question, Senator Braun. The dynamic has continued to change. Its pivoting with each region as we continue to expand the opportunities for youth in Indiana.

We are really making a concerted effort by changing legislation, grad pathways. I think you are very familiar with the fact that now Indiana requires each graduating high school senior to have a work based learning experience before graduation. That took place in effective of 2023, in that cohort.

That really, to me, underscores how serious we are taking those skills, and I think that is also—the leading that through education is the importance of that, and how we continue to identify those opportunities for those students and show those skills that are needed.

We talk a lot about people showing up on time and people really becoming team players, and a lot of that comes from experience. And Indiana, I think is really taking us seriously with our educators and our parents.

Senator BRAUN. That is good. And then what about on the industry end? I think they have always wanted our school systems to kind of produce that perfect mix of future employees, and I think they probably have become more engaged as well. Are you seeing that?

Mr. RHORER. Absolutely. Industry is definitely coming to the table through partnerships with CICP and Ascend Indiana and others and to the state. They are coming to the regions and really trying to show how they are leaning into education.

A lot of—everything we have talked about today underscores the importance of this being an employer led initiative. Youth apprenticeship is only as strong as employers develop and then compensates the curriculums.

I think employers are really taking this to heart and looking at this as a viable pipeline for Indiana.

Senator BRAUN. Then what about, because ours is really a rural state, we probably have 50, 55 counties that have got agriculture and manufacturing, a part of it. Are we seeing this in the rural communities and counties as well?

Mr. RHORER. Yes, absolutely. That is one of the things that we are talking through and how to scale because you have transportation issues, you have career counseling issues. But 62 of our 92 counties are nearly 20 percent manufacturing intensity.

We have to get rural to get this scaled at the proper end. We have more and more regions. As I alluded to earlier, we have five more partnerships that are growing by 2025 with more in the pipeline for development. So, it is scaling.

Senator BRAUN. Then the difference between an industry recognized apprenticeship and registered apprenticeships, is that starting to diminish or is there still a distinction made that would be relevant to employers?

Mr. RHORER. It is starting to diminish. I mean, they are both equally important. As mentioned earlier in California statement about unions are incredibly important and still prominent in Indiana, but there is also several nonunion.

Those industry recognized credentials, automotive space, particularly for me and others, it is incredibly important. And they have to work together, and they will, and they continue to in Indiana.

Senator BRAUN. Very good. I want to start with Mr. Day and Mr. Patch and then Ms. Tugade on that issue of stigmatizing pathways to career and technical education versus 2 year or 4 year pathways. Give me your take on that, and then we will move down the line.

Mr. DAY. That is definitely the heavy lift right there, sir. We have had so many years, decades, in fact, of pushing all students, as you mentioned earlier, toward college. And we are now destigmatizing the work of career preparation.

I think we have done that in a number of different ways. Some as reimagining how a career center like the CCIC can appear to students. We do—a fair amount of our work is marketing the opportunities we have for our students. Like we bring every eighth grader through an entire district.

We bring them all through our campus, so they get to see what we have available to us. And we have students who are currently in our program, speak on the behalf of the program, which is a fantastic way, again, to remove that stigma in terms of where those students can see themselves in a career and how they get there, very drastically differently from the college only path. That has made a tremendous difference for us.

Senator BRAUN. Thank you. And Mr. Patch, my comment on the pay differences, if there are any, and whether you can get into a career with nearly the same amount of pay and no debt from further education?

Mr. PATCH. By coming into industry—?

Senator BRAUN. Yes.

Mr. PATCH. Yes. For sure. We, our career paths that we give in the—our industry itself, between leadership, engineering quality. You can get into making a good wage, learn where you want to go, and then we will pay for your school.

Senator BRAUN. Thank you. Ms. Tugade.

Ms. TUGADE. In response to the—

Senator BRAUN. Yes. In your view, in terms of 4 year degree versus apprenticeship, CTE and getting directly into the workforce.

Ms. TUGADE. Absolutely. One of the most successful programs we have had at SEIU, United Healthcare Workers has been our Futuro Health Recruitment Program. And so, that was primarily focused at recruiting worker—the family and friends of our incumbent workers.

They were people who already knew—they already knew what the health care field looked like. They already knew the difficulties, but they also knew what it could do for them. They knew how life changing that work could be.

That was actually one of the best programs that we have had and has been actually so successful that we have run out of spots so far. And so, really, again, relying on those networks that are already built.

Senator BRAUN. Thank you.

Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINE. Thanks to the witnesses. We both need to vote and so I am going to go quick because there is a vote on. I am the chairman, along with Senator Young of Indiana, of the Career and Technical Education Caucus here.

The son of an ironworker and welder. Senator Braun and I are the co-sponsors of a bill that would allow Pell Grants to be used for high quality career and technical education, the Jobs Act, which we need to pass.

I am really interested in this, and I am excited to see a real renaissance in career and technical education in our K-12 systems all across the country, innovative programs. This is great. Here is a group of youngsters I am worried about. There is about 4.5 million people in this country, between 16 and 24, who are disconnected from both school and work.

Programs that are smart programs within school systems are great and we need them, but we also have a group of kids who want to have work experiences or need to who are not working, and they are not at school. Can any of you share strategies that you have used to try to reach out to them?

I have a bill that I am introducing this week called the Opening Doors for Youth Act with, Congressman Scott on the House side, and it is to focus on this group of what we call opportunity youth, but strategies that you all are using to deal with these kids, I would love to hear. Yes, Mr. Day, can we start with you?

Mr. DAY. Of course, Senator. Yes, thank you for the question. So, we use a number of different strategies.

One is, again, bringing all of our eighth graders through. And I can give you a quick anecdote of we have eight home high schools that we serve, and we take students from as part of coming to our campus for the programs that they have there.

We will sometimes get those calls from the home high school and say, look, we can see on the attendance record they are showing up for you. You need to tell them to come to math class, right.

The engagement of CTE, that career technical education class, can be so high that it can be the lifeline that you are talking about. It is getting them into the classroom. So it is that marketing to them.

It is reaching out and making sure they are aware of the opportunities. We provide a number of different summer opportunities for our most at risk youth. We do a lot of grant writing to be able to bring those folks in so that we can have the teachers and obviously the students present on campus, so they get those experiences. And you are exactly right, it can be transformational.

One of the things we have done very early in my tenure at CCIC is remove all barriers for admissions. So, there is no minimum

GPA. There is no teacher letter of recommendation. All those things are out the door, so we don't have to—we welcome and include all students who are interested. It makes a big difference.

Senator KAINE. One of the things you said, and I think Senator Braun said it earlier too, to start earlier, start before a youngster becomes disconnected from school. If you can start late in elementary or in middle school and show people paths that they might not be aware of, that can actually spark their interest in keeping them connected and having them stay. How about others dealing—Mr. Rhorer, I see you are ready to punch the button.

Mr. RHORER. Yes. Yes, very interested to talk about this.

We really have spent some time marketing, as mentioned before, the opportunities specifically in advanced manufacturing logistics in Indiana, trying to reach that younger group and make them understand that they do have opportunities coming out of high school.

We also really pair down our career and technical education and aligned it with post-secondary, Ivy Tech. We are fortunate enough that we have one community college in the State of Indiana, and that community college is in lockstep with career and technical education. So, we are really showing that students can go through those pathways.

They are meaningful, they have credentialing to those, and then they lead to those good and promising jobs. So much so we actually took career and technical education this last year and it is now as high—now it is housed underneath career—the Commissioner of Higher Education.

Senator KAINE. Fantastic. I want to ask a slightly separate question on the same topic to Mr. Patch and Ms. Tugade. You said one of—I think Ms. Tugade, I think you said looking at programs and you said one of the challenges is if corporations just see this as a social responsibility thing rather than they need it as a pipeline for employees, they may be less willing to do it.

Mr. Patch, you described the program as, you realize you are going to have a need to hire these technicians, so you kind of created a program. So, you are both looking at it, not just as a good thing to do, but as something that is necessary to help businesses thrive and students and young people have access to employment.

Talk a little bit about that, trying to convince companies not this is just a good thing to do, but it is really going to be in their interests to creatively engage with programs like this.

Mr. PATCH. Yes, for sure, and thank you for the question. That is what we recognized back in 2017. We were bringing in a new process.

We were doing a production ramp, and we knew that there was going to be a limited supply of hireable workers, right. And so, going into the high schools, we knew that there was a percentage of them—I can't—I don't know what the percentage is at this time, but there is a percentage that had a choice, right.

You go into the career, you go into the military, or you go to school, right. And as colleges are getting more and more expensive, we just had to show them the pathway to the career, and that is what we did with District 6.

They had an innovation of career and college ready, so we went with the career side of it, and we started touching young at 3 years—or three, grade three, through grade five. And not only the kids that we touched, we touched the parents as well, so that way the parents knew what was out there for them, because the more we get the parents involved, the more that they would push their kids toward a more career at that point.

Having it as our industry with advanced manufacturing, we could show them a pathway inside of our work so they just wouldn't get in and be stale and work for five, 6 years as a worker. They could actually grow and eventually take college if they would like to.

Senator KAINE. [Technical problems]—I am going to yield back to the Chairman and go vote, but I appreciate all of you—[technical problems]. Thank you so much.

Senator BRAUN. We are waiting on Chairman Hickenlooper to come back. So, I will let any one of you from the discussion that we have had, what would you like to add to it that we have missed? Mr. Day, we will start with you.

Mr. DAY. I would speak to an opportunity that we are proud of. One thing we implemented at the Cherry Creek Innovation Campus for a population that has not been discussed yet, but I think is just as important to include.

We are part of a national program called a Uniquely Abled Academy, and we implemented the first program of such in the State of Colorado. And it serves a specifically unique population of adults with level one autism that have a set of characteristics and traits and abilities that are specific to high—they excel at high precision jobs, which makes them a great employer in a high precision manufacturing site.

We train a program—we offer a training program, pardon me, in the evenings and in the summer for these young adults. And they can earn their NIMS certification, their national metalworking certification, as a machinist.

We are proud to say we have taken two cohorts through the program already, and we are providing employment to a segment of our population that is classically been underemployed. And we think that is an exciting aspect of what we are talking about here. It is a small group of folks, but it is just as important as we would—all the others.

Mr. PATCH. Yes. For me, I attend many roundtable meetings in Northern Colorado with other advanced manufacturing businesses, and they are truly tentative to start apprenticeship programs due to the cost and the effort of just putting together, because the cost is real.

I feel if this Youth Apprenticeship Advancement Act is passed, that will push some more advanced manufacturing or employers to take that risk and say, hey, yes, we are going to do this because now it will help us fund this project or program.

Senator BRAUN. Mr. Rhorer.

Mr. RHORER. I say Indiana is not alone in this. We have roughly 25,000 kids coming out of high school every year that don't have a plan. They are not enrolled, enlisted, or employed in Indiana.

Youth apprenticeship gives them opportunity to get some guidance and some direction that is very well needed for those youth, that 16 to 24 year old that is unemployed right now. Then you also look at the employers, the cost of having vacant jobs in Indiana.

We did a study 2 years ago that demonstrated if we had 85,000 opened manufacturing jobs in Indiana, it would cost our economy about \$6.7 billion.

We need to understand how to fulfill that, and this pipeline development that we are doing right now, including youth apprenticeship, is exactly how we do that. Thank you.

Senator BRAUN. Ms. Tugade.

Ms. TUGADE. Thank you. I think most critically, these programs need to be youth centered. In California, we have actually broken out these programs into out-of-school youth and in-school youth in recognition of this need to particularly serve those disconnected youth.

Those out-of-school youth are getting additional wraparound services, counselors, transportation, all sorts of additional wrap-around services. And to the point of the other panelists, that is expensive.

But we have to look at this as an investment, because the cost of the vacancies in these high need industries is much higher, especially as we go forward. And so, how do we make this easier, how do we create clarity with our business partners and with our school partners through minimum industry training criteria, through competency templates to make sure that we are able to scale easily. So, with that, I will pass it back—

Senator BRAUN. Thank you. And I am going to forego my closing statement. And I would like to ask, Brad, if you want to, take a trip by my office on your way out. I would love to talk to you a little further about what is happening in Indiana. So, if that works, I will see you in a bit.

Mr. RHORER. Thank you.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Thank you, Senator Braun. Appreciate you filling in and covering. As I said in the beginning, thank all of you for making the trek out here, spending the time with us. I think we will see additional questions come in for you that hopefully you can get a chance to look at and get the answers.

The rule of thumb, if any Senators do want to ask additional questions for the record, they will be due by 5.00 p.m., 10 business days from today. That is March 26th. So, we will make sure that gets circulated.

Mr. Day, Mr. Patch, Mr. Rhorer, Ms. Tugade, thank you. Again, this is very instructive, and I think as we begin to work forward on trying to find what are the legitimate compromises to the obstacles we have to passing this bill, it is going to take perspectives from all different points of view and all different points of the political compass. And you guys represent that to a large extent.

Hopefully we can get this ball moving to the point where we do function closer to the Swedish or the Swiss model of apprenticeships where it is accepted that this is a viable, valuable opportunity for any one of our youth if they are so inclined and this is what attracts them.

We got a lot of work to do, but I appreciate all the work you have already done. This is my grandfather when we were kids, and he gets to go out, pick up crab apples that he used to make into this, basically the apple brandy in his basement. But at the end of a whole day, we would have all these bags of apples.

He would say, look how much we have got done. And then he would point to the trees and say, look how much we still have to do. That is what I say to each of you. Thank you for all that you have done. Look how much we still have to do. The Committee now stands adjourned.

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

REGIONAL OPPORTUNITY INITIATIVES,

March 11, 2024.

Hon. JOHN HICKENLOOPER *Chairman,*
U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Employment and Workplace Safety,
374 Russell Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC.

Dear CHAIRMAN HICKENLOOPER:

Regional Opportunity Initiatives (ROI) is pleased to support and share the value of youth apprenticeship in Indiana. ROI's UpSkill Work & Learn Initiative is a high-quality work-based learning (WBL) strategy inspired by the modern youth apprenticeship (MYA) model. The program offers students a 2-year opportunity to work and learn while in high school with the option to continue with the employer into a third year after graduation. The program allows students the chance to develop skills they cannot achieve in the classroom and the employers the opportunity to grow their local workforce. The UpSkill program is in its third cohort and the number of student and employer partners continues to grow.

UpSkill was identified early on as an essential tool for developing and retaining talent in the Indiana Uplands. Regional employers are experiencing unprecedented job growth that is outpacing that of communities across the country. From 2012 to 2023, Automotive and Heavy Vehicles jobs have grown by 212 percent, National Security and Defense by 16.6 percent and Biomedical by 23.2 percent. Developing both talent and an affinity for living and working in this region is essential. UpSkill accomplishes both.

The State of Indiana is also embracing youth apprenticeship as an essential vehicle for building the talent we require and supporting the workforce needs of a growing employer base. Several members of ROI's team have been engaged at the state level in rethinking how we should be structuring learning experiences for young people through WBL strategies like UpSkill. We are glad to be part of the coalition of Indiana's leaders from sectors including employment, education, government, and philanthropy, working to advance MYA. Working together we can grow a talent pool that will make this state attractive to host of employers in growing sectors including advanced technologies. It will help the State of Indiana grow its population and per capita income, both priorities for our growing state.

Support for apprenticeships at the Federal level will be critical as states like Indiana work to scale the opportunities for the benefit of young people, employers, and communities. Programming that enables, and even incents, employers, schools, post-secondary institutions, and intermediaries to accelerate ea options of modern apprenticeships can be a game changer.

Sincerely,

TINA PETERSON,
PRESIDENT AND CEO.

EMPLOYINDY,
INDIANAPOLIS, IN.

Hon. MIKE BRAUN *Ranking Member,*
U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Employment and Workplace Safety,
404 Russell Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC.

Dear SENATOR BRAUN:

My name is Marie Mackintosh, and I serve as President and CEO of EmployIndy, the workforce development board for Marion County, Indiana. EmployIndy guides the local workforce ecosystem and makes strategic investments to promote equity and remove barriers to quality employment for underserved and underrepresented residents. One of the most exciting and promising practices we have found to meet this need is through Modern Apprenticeship. I am writing today to urge your continued and immediate support for this model of work-based learning for our young people.

The United States—and Indiana in particular—has an education problem. To meet the demands of our growing and changing economy, 72 percent of jobs will require postsecondary education and/or training by 2031. As a business owner yourself, I am sure you recognize the urgent need for talent in our local economy.

However, in Indiana, fewer high school students are pursuing postsecondary enrollment or completing a credential or degree. Just 53 percent of Indiana's high school graduates go on to college, down from 65 percent in 2015. Only two thirds of those college-goers complete a program within 6 years. Many of those who do graduate in time are not earning degrees in in-demand areas. At the same time, we currently need 215,000 people to close our skills gap in Indianapolis alone.

In order to reverse this trend, in 2020, the Modern Apprenticeship Program (MAP) launched in Indianapolis—providing employers with an innovative approach to a time-tested model for building their talent pipeline. To date, MAP has placed 122 students from 14 high schools with 41 employers and counting. These students are taking on occupations in growing, high-demand industries, many of which are occupations registered with the U.S. Department of Labor. Students are getting a headstart in a promising career in in-demand fields such as healthcare, information technology, and advanced manufacturing. We have found dedicated employer partners in companies such as Eli Lilly, Indianapolis Airport Authority, and Roche Diagnostics.

In order to continue to scale and sustain our success, we need your support in building a national framework that encourages, not stifles, the growth of apprenticeship as a viable and attractive career path for students and talent pipeline for employers.

EmployIndy has found that letting the employers lead in alignment with their industry standards is proven to be most successful in training and retaining quality apprentices while providing a positive return on investment for those employers. We believe this can be accomplished by maintaining the following principles when developing law and rulemaking around apprenticeships:

- Ensure quality.
 - Apprenticeship duration needs to be a certain amount of seat time in order to see the return on investment. 50 percent of that time onsite with the employer should be on-the-job training.
 - Competencies, curriculum, and end of course assessments should be developed by the employers in alignment with industry standards.
- Businesses need to lead.
 - federally, set minimum standards for states.
 - Define the role businesses should play in apprenticeship law at the state level.

Thank you for your consideration. Together, we hope to grow and sustain Modern Apprenticeship into a career path that meets the needs of our students, employers, and state.

Thank you,

MARIE MACKINTOSH,
PRESIDENT AND CEO,
EMPLOYINDY.

OPTIN,
EVANSVILLE, IN.

Hon. JOHN HICKENLOOPER, *Chairman,*
U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Employment and Workplace Safety,
374 Russell Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC.

Hon. MIKE BRAUN, *Ranking Member,*
U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Employment and Workplace Safety,
404 Russell Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC.

HON. JOHN HICKENLOOPER and HON. MIKE BRAUN:

I am writing to you in support of Ascend Indiana and their work in leading a statewide group of educators, community partners and industry leaders, in an effort to develop and scale quality modern youth apprenticeship programs across Indiana. Ascend Indiana is a statewide initiative focused on creating opportunities for students and ensuring Indiana employers have the access to talent needed to grow and diversify our economy, while providing every Hoosier with the opportunity to pursue a career they are passionate about.

As employees of the largest school corporation in Southwestern Indiana, we understand the need to develop quality talent in high demand local industries, such as healthcare and manufacturing. With the support of Ascend and the Modern Youth Apprenticeship initiative, we have been able to begin the education and connection to employers and post-secondary education in high school.

Indiana is a national leader in the work of Modern Youth Apprenticeship. OptIN, as a program of the Evansville Vanderburgh School corporation, has worked to create youth apprenticeships in Healthcare, Manufacturing, Welding and Education. With the support of Ascend Indiana, OptIN has partnered with Southwest Indiana's largest employers to create meaningful opportunities for students while also creating a sustainable talent pipeline for each of the region's top 4 industry sectors. We appreciate your continued support of Ascend and Modern Youth Apprenticeship.

Sincerely,

B. J. WATTS,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OPTIN,
MEMBER, INDIANA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION.
ROBIN WOEBKENBERG,
CTE COUNSELOR, OPTIN.

REGIONAL OPPORTUNITY INITIATIVES,
March 11, 2024.

Hon. MIKE BRAUN *Ranking Member,*
U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Employment and Workplace Safety,
404 Russell Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC.

Dear RANKING MEMBER BRAUN:

Regional Opportunity Initiatives (ROI) is pleased to support and share the value of youth apprenticeship in Indiana. ROI's UpSkill Work & Learn Initiative is a high-quality work-based learning (WBL) strategy inspired by the modern youth apprenticeship (MYA) model. The program offers students a 2-year opportunity to work and learn while in high school with the option to continue with the employer into a third year after graduation. The program allows students the chance to develop skills they cannot achieve in the classroom and the employers the opportunity to grow their local workforce. The UpSkill program is in its third cohort and the number of student and employer partners continues to grow.

UpSkill was identified early on as an essential tool for developing and retaining talent in the Indiana Uplands. Regional employers are experiencing unprecedented job growth that is outpacing that of communities across the country. From 2012 to 2023, Automotive and Heavy Vehicles jobs have grown by 212 percent, National Security and Defense by 16.6 percent and Biomedical by 23.2 percent. Developing both talent and an affinity for living and working in this region is essential. UpSkill accomplishes both.

The State of Indiana is also embracing youth apprenticeship as an essential vehicle for building the talent we require and supporting the workforce needs of a growing employer base. Several members of ROI's team have been engaged at the state level in rethinking how we should be structuring learning experiences for young

people through WBL strategies like UpSkill. We are glad to be part of the coalition of Indiana's leaders from sectors including employment, education, government, and philanthropy, working to advance MYA. Working together we can grow a talent pool that will make this state attractive to host of employers in growing sectors including advanced technologies. It will help the State of Indiana grow its population and per capita income, both priorities for our growing state.

Support for apprenticeships at the Federal level will be critical as states like Indiana work to scale the opportunities for the benefit of young people, employers, and communities. Programming that enables, and even incents, employers, schools, post-secondary institutions, and intermediary to accelera ea options of modern apprenticeships can be a game changer.

Sincerely,

TINA PETERSON,
PRESIDENT AND CEO,
REGIONAL OPPORTUNITY INITIATIVES.

JPMORGAN CHASE POLICYCENTER

Chairman Hickenlooper, Ranking Member Braun, and Members of the Subcommittee on Employment and Workplace Safety, thank you for the opportunity to provide a statement for the record in support of youth apprenticeships.

In less than a decade, one-third of the United States workforce will need to learn new skills and find work in new occupations. In fact, 87 percent of companies are experiencing or expect to experience a skills mismatch—the misalignment between the skills workers possess and jobs require. Youth apprenticeships, which allow youth to participate in paid, industry-aligned work experiences, can play a role in addressing this mismatch.

JPMorgan Chase has experienced firsthand how youth apprenticeships can be a talent pipeline strategy to address workforce needs. In collaboration with CareerWise New York, JPMorgan Chase offers youth apprenticeships that allow high school students to develop skills related to business operations or software engineering through blended classroom training and on-the-job experience at the firm. Students in the program earn debt-free college credit and nationally recognized industry certificates, all while graduating on time.

While JPMorgan Chase has benefited from youth apprenticeships, there are barriers to the growth and success of youth apprenticeships nationally that policy can help to address. For example, youth apprenticeships should be defined at the Federal level. Currently, there is no Federal definition for youth apprenticeships. The U.S. Department of Labor's Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Data base System (RAPIDS), which pulls together learner-level data from 25 federally administered and 18 state-administered Registered Apprenticeships systems, does not differentiate between youth-and adult-focused programs, making it challenging to gauge the experiences and outcomes of youth apprentices.

Additionally, many employers do not register their apprenticeship programs because of the administrative requirements associated with them or because they find that the Registered Apprenticeship program standards do not align with their current skilling efforts. To incentivize employer participation, the registration process for employers can be simplified and streamlined to address administrative barriers, such as having to re-register the same programs in multiple states, and standards can be modernized without sacrificing quality to recognize different approaches to skilling, such as competency-based approaches.

JPMorgan Chase has released *policy recommendations* to expand and modernize apprenticeship programs, including youth apprenticeships.

We thank the Members of the Subcommittee for their leadership on youth apprenticeships, and we encourage Congress to advance these important workforce policy reforms.

ASCEND INDIANA,
INDIANAPOLIS, IN.

Hon. JOHN HICKENLOOPER, *Chairman,*
U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Employment and Workplace Safety,
374 Russell Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC.

Hon. MIKE BRAUN, *Ranking Member,*
U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Employment and Workplace Safety,
404 Russell Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC.

HON. JOHN HICKENLOOPER and HON. MIKE BRAUN:

I am writing to you on behalf of Ascend Indiana and its work with a statewide coalition of Indiana leaders dedicated to delivering and scaling modern youth apprenticeship programs across the Hoosier State. Ascend Indiana is a statewide initiative focused on ensuring Indiana employers have the talent needed to thrive and every Indiana citizen has the opportunity to pursue a meaningful career.

Talent development is personal to me not only as a representative of Ascend Indiana, but as a 25-year automotive manufacturing professional who has spent a good portion of my career creating talent pathways for one of Indiana's largest manufacturers.

Indiana is not unlike any other state in the Nation facing a persistent talent shortfall. Hoosier leaders are all too familiar with the data: a concerning statewide labor force participation rate hovering at 64 percent, an alarming 75 percent of Indiana employers who cannot find enough qualified candidates to fill open positions, an aging population preparing for retirement, and a strained talent pipeline that only worsened during the pandemic.

Indiana, however, is among the few states in the Nation actively scaling up a proven solution: youth apprenticeships. Indiana has established a coalition of stakeholders from philanthropic organizations, chambers, education, industry and the public sector to design and implement youth apprenticeships across the state in order to prepare more high school students for in-demand careers making up today's workforce. Our goal is to scale apprenticeship programs statewide to ensure every student has access to high-quality education and training options by 2030.

In 2016, Indiana leaders began learning about Switzerland's dual vocational education and training (VET) system through convenings led by the bipartisan National Conference of State Legislatures and funded by the *Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation*. Discussions centered on the NCSL report, "*No Time to Lose: How to Build a World-Class Education System State by State*," which highlighted the Swiss dual VET system. Switzerland's system is considered the "gold standard" for educating young people and meeting labor market demand, with about 70 percent of Swiss youth participating in a three-or 4-year paid apprenticeship spanning the entire labor market, totaling about 180,000 people ages 16 to 19.

These learning sessions culminated in a planning process in 2019 led by the Partnership to Advance Youth Apprenticeship (PAYA). A 25-person planning group took a deeper dive on the Swiss model and benchmarked with other states piloting youth apprenticeship. The group determined the *CareerWise Colorado* model aligned best with Indiana. Colorado's model has youth begin 3-year, paid apprenticeships in 11th grade, culminating in a high school diploma, college credit, and an industry credential.

In July 2019, a subset of the Indiana planning group attended *CEMETS Institute* in Zurich to see first-hand the Swiss system and develop a plan for Indiana. The group decided on a two-pronged approach to implementing a Swiss-style youth apprenticeship system:

- (1). **Launch of Swiss-style pilot programs in Indiana.** The first cohort of apprentices launched in Elkhart County in 2019 through the work of *CareerWise Elkhart County*. Marion County launched the *MAP* program in 2020 through the joint efforts of *Ascend Indiana* and *EmployIndy*, placing its first cohort of apprentices in 2021.
- (2). **Create a statewide Community of Practice (COP) to convene communities across Indiana working to implement Swiss-style youth apprenticeship programs.** Ascend Indiana designed and currently oversees the COP, which launched in March 2020. Through the COP, Ascend has raised additional national and state funding and provided planning grants and technical assistance to support the launch of eight addi-

tional sites. As of 2023, there are five sites operating and five more in the planning phase.

Indiana's youth apprenticeship programs begin in 11th grade and average 3 years with students earning a high school diploma, college credit and an industry credential upon completion. These year-round, paid employment experiences span many industries, including insurance, business services, life sciences, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing. Today, five pilot programs are operating and have placed more than 400 students with more than 50 employers. There are five more pilot programs that are currently in the planning phase with the support of Ascend Indiana and have plans to launch in 2025. Finally, the statewide COP engages 125 members across 60 organizations to continue to discuss how Indiana can scale youth apprenticeship opportunities in Indiana.

Through the youth apprenticeship pilot programs, Indiana leaders have identified common implementation challenges:

- Businesses view youth apprenticeship as corporate social responsibility instead of a core component of the employer's talent recruitment, development, and retention strategies,
- Youth apprenticeships are layered on top of existing high school coursework, making it difficult for students to have consistent, dedicated work hours at the employer site,
- Communities lack reliable transportation solutions for students to travel to workplaces,
- High schools have limited career counseling capacity, impeding awareness of the variety of career pathways available in Indiana, and
- A lack of industry-defined competencies that are developed by employers and enable consistency of experiences and, ultimately, the ability to scale.

As Hoosiers, we always come together, collectively solve challenges and map out the best path forward. That's just how we do things in Indiana. To scale youth apprenticeship programs statewide, Indiana is well on its way. We have collectively identified short-term priorities such as establishing a governing committee to oversee strategic planning, implementation, and sustainability, and an operational structure that delineates the roles of private, public, and nonprofit partners. Another priority is to identify policies that hamper scaling youth apprenticeships and to address barriers.

One significant step that was taken in 2023 by the Indiana General Assembly was legislation that defined Modern Youth Apprenticeship and requires two semesters of academic instruction, 650 work hours, paid experience, postsecondary credits and potential credential attainment. This enables consistency of program implementation, and it starts to ensure a bar for quality.

It's important that all youth—nationwide—have access to apprenticeships. Indiana's coalition has made significant progress to give youth equal access to career opportunities and businesses access to skilled talent. But, to scale apprenticeships here in Indiana—and nationwide—the coalition believes the youth apprenticeship system needs:

- (1). A framework and definition of youth apprenticeship that is output oriented. It is vital that the framework allows for flexibility in program design to meet community needs.
- (2). An employer-led model. Youth apprenticeships need to be defined at a high level, so employers are clear about their role in the ecosystem. This allows them to best identify where to invest and develop capacity. Additionally, industry associations need to engage and provide input on the development of an occupation. Funding from the Federal Government could help states define occupation mapping at a state-level.
- (3). Easy access for employers and students. This includes funding that supports career advising services and the delivery of those services through multiple channels, transportation, wrap-around services and building capacity with intermediaries to help students and employers navigate the system.

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you the journey Indiana is taking with its coalition. I hope our experience—and our progress—provides you with the

information needed to find ways to make youth apprenticeship programs available to students and businesses across the Nation.

Sincerely,

BRADLEY RHORER,
PRESIDENT AND CEO,
ASCEND INDIANA.

[Whereupon, at 2:56 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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