

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 15, 2024

Julie Su
Acting Secretary of Labor
Department of Labor
200 Constitution Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Acting Secretary Su,

We write to express our deep concerns with the Biden Administration's partisan and misguided changes to the National Apprenticeship System. On January 17, 2024, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) released its Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) entitled "National Apprenticeship System Enhancements." This proposed rule imposes unnecessary and detrimental regulations on registered apprenticeships. We urge you to withdraw the proposed rule.

Apprenticeships have a long tradition in the United States as a way for workers to gain on the job training, technical skills and knowledge needed to succeed in their career. This pathway is a valuable option for individuals seeking an alternative to a traditional college education. The flexibility made possible through apprenticeships presents a ladder of success to individuals from a wide range of backgrounds.

Businesses and other sponsors of apprenticeship programs already face financial and administrative burdens. The proposed rule further discourages employer participation. The DOL is imposing burdensome requirements, hindering flexibility, limiting non-union worker training, and forcing employers to comply with a grave agenda.


Currently, completion of a registered apprenticeship program is measured by employers using one of three methods: the trainee's competency, on-the-job training hours, or a combination of competency and time. The proposed rule requires all apprenticeship programs to provide a minimum of 2,000 hours of on-the-job training and 144 hours of classroom training. Employers understand the qualifications and skills a prospective employee needs to be successful. The one-size-fits-all Washington mandate does not take into consideration the various dynamics of apprenticeship programs across localities and industries. The burdensome requirement will also be particularly difficult for small businesses to fulfill as they may lack the flexibility and resources necessary.


In addition, the Administration is attempting to limit non-union apprenticeships. If unions accuse a non-union program of misconduct or non-compliance, the proposed rule allows the DOL to dissolve the apprenticeship program, without verification by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). This rule creates conditions where union membership is all but compulsory and undermines workers' rights to choose union membership. This is especially pertinent in rural

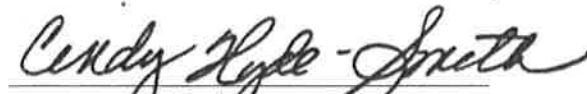
areas where a majority of apprenticeship programs are sponsored by small businesses with no union affiliation or where unionized workforces do not meet their unique needs. According to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics, union membership rate in the private-sector for 2023 was 6 percent throughout the United States.


We urge the DOL to fully consider the detrimental impacts the proposed rule would have on apprenticeship programs across the country. We request you withdraw this proposed rule and reevaluate your approach to apprenticeship programs.

Sincerely,


John Barrasso, M.D.
United States Senator

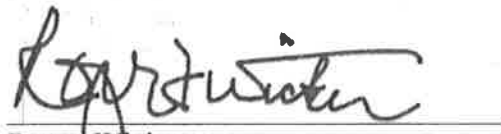

Cynthia Lummis
United States Senator



Cindy Hyde-Smith
United States Senator

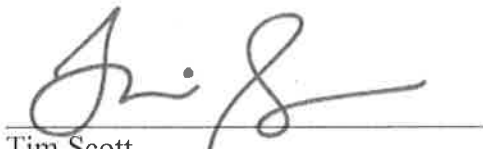

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Shelley Moore Capito
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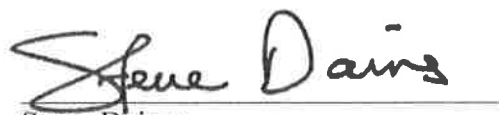

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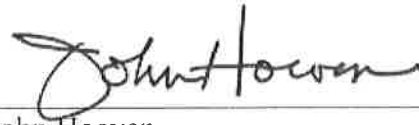

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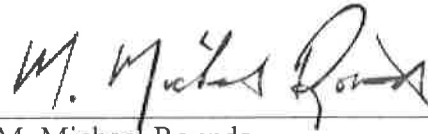
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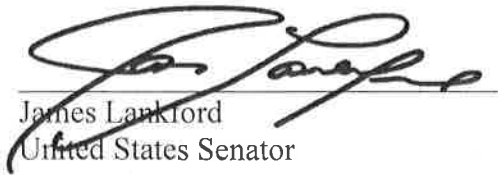
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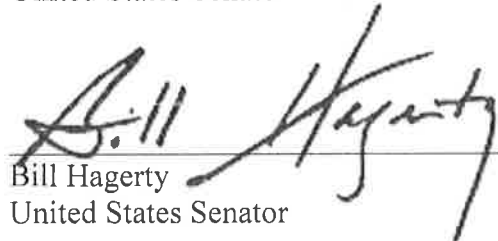
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