



STATEMENT
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AN IMPORTANT FIRST STEP

WASHINGTON – President Donald Trump signed an executive order Thursday that could more than double federal spending on apprenticeship and give more flexibility to training providers, including employers and employer associations, to develop apprenticeship programs that fit their needs, closing the skills gaps in their industries. Opportunity America president Tamar Jacoby made the following statement.

The Opportunity America Jobs and Careers Coalition welcomes President Trump’s announcement and applauds his commitment to addressing skills mismatches that are curtailing economic growth and closing off opportunities for millions of Americans.

The skills gap, growing quietly for decades, is now reaching crisis proportions. Even with unemployment at the lowest point in a decade, 6 million jobs stand empty across America. Businesses are struggling to fill positions, less skilled workers are falling further and further behind, and many who lack needed skills are dropping out of the labor force.

The Opportunity America Jobs and Careers Coalition is encouraged to see the president use his bully pulpit to call attention to this urgent issue. Coalition members are pleased by his pledge to increase federal funding for some training programs and eager to learn more about his promising commitment to streamline federal regulations and cut red tape, empowering employers and employer groups to develop programs that will make a difference in their industries.

The registration process and other burdensome regulatory requirements deter many otherwise interested employers from launching apprenticeship programs. Easing those burdens could significantly spur adoption of apprenticeship by a broad spectrum of employers across multiple industries – but only if deregulation is well-targeted and thoroughgoing.

Employers across America are eager to do their part to train workers, whether in-house at the company or in partnership with training providers at high schools, colleges and in the public workforce system. Some Jobs and Careers Coalition members are strongly committed to registered apprenticeship. Others look to alternative models. All welcome greater flexibility and efficiency from government and a federal strategy that leaves options open, providing adequate funding for a variety of approaches.

The Jobs and Careers Coalition agrees with the president: the best way to address workforce education is on a bipartisan basis. Coalition members look forward to working with the White House and Congress to flesh out the president’s proposals, moving forward to confront one of the most pressing problems of our time.

The Opportunity America Jobs and Careers Coalition is a Washington-based business coalition focused on career education and workforce development. Members include employers and employer associations from a broad range of industries experiencing skills mismatches and worker shortages – IT, manufacturing, construction and hospitality, among others.