



COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY
Lamar Smith, Chairman

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Statement by Chairwoman Barbara Comstock (R-Va.)

Mentoring, Training, and Apprenticeships for STEM Education and Careers

Chairwoman Comstock: This morning's hearing will explore how participation in mentoring, training and apprenticeship opportunities impact STEM students and may assist in addressing the growing need for a diverse and technically trained STEM workforce. The purpose of this hearing is to try to identify what STEM workforce development programs should be further examined and what statistics are needed to increase our understanding of these tools, the contexts in which they are most effective, and the barriers to their application and expansion.

About 20 percent of all jobs in the U.S. economy require some level of STEM training. Those occupations are projected to grow about nine percent over the next decade, faster than any other employment category. In order to meet this demand, Congress needs to make informed decisions on what are the most impactful and innovative tools to address the STEM skills gap and build up America's skilled technical workforce.

A majority of these technical STEM jobs do not require a bachelor's degree. In many cases, these good positions – such as computer programmers, information technology support and nurses – require two-year degrees, occupational licenses or certifications.

Technical STEM jobs are often among the best paying and most stable jobs available to individuals with sub-baccalaureate education. By supporting innovative workforce development programs for STEM careers like those our witnesses are part of, we not only increase the students' economic opportunities and security, but the nation's.

To ensure the United States' competitiveness in the global economy of today, we must leverage the hard work and ingenuity of women and men of all ages, education levels and backgrounds to grow America's technical workforce.

I look forward to building on the progress this committee has already made through the INSPIRE Women Act, which was signed into law by the president last year, and the recently House-passed Building Blocks of STEM Act, to encourage and grow the number of young women and under-represented minorities in STEM fields.

Reaching these groups at a young age and motivating them to study STEM is extremely important but we must also ensure we support programs aimed at keeping women and under-represented minorities in the STEM pipeline and advancing in STEM careers.

There are recognized models from across the country and the world that demonstrate how apprenticeships, mentoring and on-the-job training are tools used by many different industries to address skills gaps. One thing is clear, the most successful programs are an integration of academia, technical training and hands-on work experience. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about the programs they lead and how they are working with industry to meet the diverse and growing needs for a STEM-capable workforce.

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