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On February 15, the House Subcommittee on Research and Technology of the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology held a hearing to explore how participation in mentoring, training, and apprenticeship opportunities impact science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) students and workforce development.

The Mentoring, Training, and Apprenticeships for STEM Education and Careers hearing comes after a Joint Economic Committee Democrats report, “Expanding Opportunities through Middle-Skills Education,” that was released on January 11 highlighting the need to invest in “middle-skills” education pathways. The report shows that middle-skills jobs make up one-third of all jobs in the United States and are projected to remain in demand in the future. It outlines a common set of principles to ensure middle-skills programs effectively contribute to market success, which include expanding career opportunities without limiting future options, teaching skills that are in demand by local and regional employers, and empowering students to determine the best path for their future by improving access to information.

In his opening statement, Science Committee Chairman Lamar Smith (R-TX-21) emphasized the nation’s increasing STEM workforce demand and the importance of STEM jobs for economic prosperity, citing the National Science Board’s (NSB) recent Science and Engineering Indicators report, which found that the number of U.S. jobs requiring STEM and computer skills has grown nearly 34 percent over the past decade. Dr. Victor McCrary, vice president of the Division of Research and Economic Development at Morgan State University and member of the NSB, further underlined the need for developing a STEM-capable U.S. workforce. Dr. McCrary explained that scientific and technological advances have transformed the workplace, especially in traditionally middle class, blue-collar jobs, now demanding higher levels of STEM knowledge and skill. Other witnesses and committee members generally agreed that innovative workforce development programs can provide new opportunities for STEM education and training and for encouraging young Americans to pursue STEM-based careers.

Sources: U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee, U.S. House Subcommittee on Research and Technology
