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Testimony Before the U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee
“Manufacturing in the USA: Training America’s Workforce”
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Chairman Casey, Vice Chairman Brady, members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to testify at today’s hearing.

Americans need jobs. This fact was emphasized once again last Friday with the release of June’s unemployment numbers. And Americans are asking: where are these jobs going to come from? While some believe America can no longer compete in manufacturing, I say robust job creation can and must come from manufacturing – from what we think of as traditional manufacturing, such as Northstar Aerospace in Bedford Park, Illinois that makes parts for the Apache helicopter, to Advanced Diamond Technologies in Romeoville, Illinois that makes coatings for artificial heart valves. Manufacturing in all its forms is critical for America’s economic future and for our national defense.

So how do we get there? One piece is clearly workforce training. It is simply not the case that when a manufacturer is ready to create a new position there will be an American ready to start the job. I constantly hear from manufacturers in my district, which has a long and proud history of small manufacturers, that they are having an increasingly difficult time finding qualified workers. This is true for all types of manufacturing – from steel to nanotechnology. If there is no qualified worker, there is no new job.

This dynamic creates the need for a two-pronged approach to worker training and workforce development: one that is focused on improving our K-12 education system so that students have the necessary basic skills for the jobs of today and tomorrow, and the other focused on post-high school training and retraining that improve the skill sets of workers.

One way to identify and devote the necessary resources for the nation’s manufacturing workforce is through the development of a national manufacturing strategy, something that this committee explored in a hearing last month. HR 1366, my National Manufacturing Strategy Act, would require government and private sector stakeholders to assess the current state of American

manufacturing, look at future technologies and economic challenges, and develop a plan for keeping America's industry competitive. Manufacturing strategies can work in high-wage free market democracies; just ask Germany which runs a robust trade surplus.

But of course, we cannot await a national strategy to address the workforce needs that our nation currently faces.

In grades K-12, students must be better educated in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, commonly known as the STEM fields. We all have heard countless times how American students are falling behind others around the world. Provisions of the America COMPETES Act, along with its reauthorization which I helped author and pass last year, seek to improve STEM ed by calling for a wide range of initiatives, including better teacher training and hands-on learning at National Laboratories, to boost interest and improve education in STEM fields at all levels. Private industry has also gotten involved. Abbott Labs has invested more than \$25 million over the last 5 years to support programs from early elementary to college that advance STEM education. In classrooms, museums, and after-school programs, these investments are tailored to build a workforce prepared for the increasingly technical job market.

At the post high school level, training and retraining initiatives can produce workers capable of filling the growing number of highly technical manufacturing jobs. In June, President Obama expanded the Skills for America's Future program to increase partnerships between manufacturing companies and community colleges. This initiative will establish a standardized credentialing system, certifying community college students with industry-recognized credentials and making it easier for employers to find potential employees.

The America COMPETES Act reauthorization also included a provision to implement grants aimed at expanding education and training in advanced manufacturing at community colleges, and requires Manufacturing Extension Partnership Centers to inform colleges of the skill areas manufacturers need so students are prepared to join the workforce upon graduation.

American industry has also been a leader and innovator when it comes to workforce development at the post-high school level. One example is the Steelworker for the Future initiative, a public-private partnership including ArcelorMittal, the United Steelworkers, and community colleges, which will pay for students to receive the technical training necessary to fill highly skilled positions throughout the nation. Not only does this program develop the skills necessary for sustaining the increasingly high-tech steel workforce, it also helps grow interest in manufacturing jobs.

But we cannot rely on the private sector alone to make the investments and develop the programs that will ensure that the United States has the skilled workforce our economy needs. Through smart investments, incentives, and well-designed programs, we must continue to support workers gaining, sustaining, and improving the skills necessary to support American manufacturing success.

I am convinced that if we do not make a concerted effort to produce the workforce needed by manufacturers that it will mean nothing less than giving up on much of the middle class, throwing in the towel on “Made in the USA”, and accepting that everything we buy – even equipment needed for national security – will be made somewhere else. We cannot allow this to happen.