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Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce
Hearing on H.R. 4526, the “21st Century Energy Workforce Development Jobs
Initiative Act of 2014”
Subcommittee on Energy and Power
September 17, 2014

I am very pleased that we are holding this hearing on this important bill authored by the Ranking Member of this Subcommittee – the 21st Century Energy Workforce Development Jobs Initiative Act. Mr. Rush’s bill addresses a major challenge for our nation: to ensure that all Americans, and especially minorities, have the skills they need to carry out the jobs available today and in the future. Specifically, this bill aims to prepare minority workers for the wide-ranging job opportunities in the energy sector.

The U.S. energy industry is in a period of transformation and growth. Steady advances in critical energy technologies and the resulting cost reductions are generating new businesses and job opportunities across the country. These jobs are being filled by workers with a range of skills and educational levels – from solar panel installers and wind turbine technicians to engineers and line-workers in electric vehicle factories. Mr. Rush’s legislation aims to ensure that these opportunities emerging throughout the energy industry will also be available to minority workers and minority-owned businesses.

Mr. Rush has been a longstanding and tenacious champion for helping minority communities gain access to the full range of career opportunities in the energy field, particularly clean energy jobs. In 2009, in the Waxman-Markey energy bill, Mr. Rush successfully pushed to include funding for the proposed “Low-Income Community Energy Efficiency Program.” This program would have provided financing for minority-owned businesses and community organizations to deliver energy efficiency and renewable energy improvements to low-income communities.

I strongly supported this effort. It would have created good clean energy jobs for local residents, while also helping low-income families save money on their energy bills through energy efficiency upgrades.

I’m also proud to support Mr. Rush’s most recent proposal. This bill would launch a comprehensive new program to create a pathway, starting at the elementary school level, for minorities to work in energy-related jobs. It would facilitate a coordinated effort among the energy industry, educational institutions, government, and labor unions to help bridge the gap

that now exists between many minority workers and the job opportunities in the energy industry.

This is an area of tremendous opportunity, if we can prepare workers with the skills they need. We are in the midst of an energy revolution, and some of the most exciting developments are occurring in clean energy.

Since 2010, the solar industry has grown at a breakneck pace and added 50,000 new jobs across America. In 2013, there were over 142,000 workers throughout the solar industry supply chain in the United States. Nearly half of these were in solar installation jobs, which earn over \$23 per hour on average. These are good, living wage jobs that cannot be outsourced. The wind industry has also grown rapidly in the United States over recent years. Texas ranks first in the country for wind power installations and wind industry jobs, while California ranks second. The wind industry has injected more than \$11 billion into California's economy and \$23 billion into the Texas economy. These investments have created jobs and a stronger, more diverse tax base.

And, as states move forward to implement the EPA's Clean Power Plan in coming years, job opportunities in the clean energy sector will expand even more rapidly. But creating jobs isn't enough-- we also have to make sure that all Americans have the training and skills they need to compete for those jobs. Congressman Rush has put forward a well-developed, bipartisan proposal to ensure that minorities, too, will benefit from these new jobs in energy. Today's hearing will provide valuable information on how this program can help translate opportunities into real jobs for minority workers.