JOB CORPS OVERSIGHT PART II: VOCATIONAL TRAINING STANDARDS

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM AND OVERSIGHT HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED FIFTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

JULY 29, 1998

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JOB CORPS OVERSIGHT PART II: VOCATIONAL TRAINING STANDARDS

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29, 1998

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES,
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM AND OVERSIGHT,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:10 a.m., in room 2154, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Christopher Shays (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Shays, Pappas, Towns, Barrett, Kucinich, and Allen.

Staff present: Lawrence J. Halloran, staff director and counsel; J. Vincent Chase, chief investigator; Jesse S. Bushman, clerk; Cherri Branson, minority counsel; and Ellen Rayner, minority chief clerk.

Mr. SHAYS. I would like to call this hearing to order and apologize for my tardiness. I would like to welcome our witnesses and our guests as well.

In previous testimony before the subcommittee, the General Accounting Office identified four indispensable characteristics of job training that works: 1, ensuring client commitment; 2, removing barriers to employment; 3, improving employability skills; and 4, linking vocational training to the local job market.

Today we continue our oversight of the Department of Labor Job Corps program, focusing on the fourth element of successful job training, maintaining a vocational curriculum that reflects current and future job opportunities.

Last October during our hearing on the Job Corps recruiting and placement activities, witnesses described an extensive system of performance and outcome measures predating and exceeding any required by the Government Performance and Results Act. Program officials reported consistent improvements in key indicators, including job placement rates and average wages.

In preparation for this hearing to examine the third critical Job Corps component, vocational training, we asked the General Accounting Office to look behind the numbers and help us examine how the program measures success in providing modern job skills to young men and women at serious risk.

Job Corps provides vocational training using the services of national and local contractors who offer courses in the trades and skills needed to enter the world of work. Training contractor performance is measured in terms of student outcomes: the number of students who complete a vocational course, the number of students

who find jobs directly related to their training and the average wages of Job Corps graduates.

Last year Job Corps officials told us more than 48 percent of all students completed vocational training, and 64 percent of employed graduates were placed in training-related jobs. For the most recent program year, Job Corps reports 64.5 percent of all students leaving a vocational program were completers, with 71.9 percent of employed students placed in jobs related to their training.

However, GAO finds these measures may seriously overstate actual Job Corps performance. The program defines completers as those who finish only a portion of a vocational curriculum, in many cases less than half the course tasks mastered by those Job Corps calls advanced completers. This semantic device boosts program performance figures but obscures an accurate view of vocational training relevance and effectiveness.

The GAO found questionable, even preposterous, attribution of training-related job placements. A student got a job as a janitor in a waffle restaurant, and the contractor claimed the placement as related to his Job Corps training as a bricklayer. A student trained as a diesel mechanic was claimed as a training match after placement as a stock checker at K–Mart. Of the placements that GAO reviewed, they found more than 40 percent of the claimed training matches tenuous or erroneous. GAO said oversight of Job Corps contractors placement claims appears inadequate.

Over the past 34 years, the Job Corps program has achieved much, and we expect much. Job Corps vocational training should be timely, complete and matched to placements in careers, not just temporary jobs. Program accountability measures should capture the hard facts about the challenges faced by Job Corps in meeting its ambitious mission. No facade of inflated numbers should mask the true measure of how well the program serves those who need it most.

Albert Einstein observed, "Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted."

To be sure, the Job Corps' uniquely intense, residential program and training in the soft job readiness skills so essential to success can be of incalculable benefit to every participant who stays the course. Nevertheless, the substantial national commitment to the Job Corps program demands stronger accountability for results that link current vocational training to tomorrow's skilled jobs.

We again look forward to the testimony of all of our witnesses today on ways to strengthen Job Corps vocational training and performance standards, and again, we welcome them.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Christopher Shays follows:]

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Statement of Rep. Christopher Shays
July 29, 1998

In previous testimony before this Subcommittee, the General Accounting Office (GAO) identified four indispensable characteristics of job training that works: 1) ensuring client commitment; 2) removing barriers to employment; 3) improving employability skills, and; 4) linking vocational training to the local job market.

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Last October, during our hearing on the Job Corps recruiting and placement activities, witnesses described an extensive system of performance and outcome measures predating and exceeding any required by the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA or "Results Act"). Program officials reported consistent improvements in key indicators, including job placement rates and average wages.

In preparation for this hearing to examine the third critical Job Corps component, vocational training, we asked the General Accounting Office (GAO) to look behind the numbers, and help us examine how the program measures success in providing modern job skills to young men and women at serious risk.

Job Corps provides vocational training using the services of national and local contractors who offer courses in the trades and skills needed to enter the world of work. Training contractor performance is measured in terms of student outcomes: the number of students who complete a vocational course, the number of students who find jobs directly related to their training, and the average wages of Job Corps graduates.

Statement of Rep. Christopher Shays
July 29, 1998
Page 2

Last year, Job Corps officials told us more than 48 percent of all students completed vocational training and 64percent of employed graduates were placed in training-related jobs. For the most recent program year, Job Corps reports "64.5 percent of all students leaving a vocational program were completers" with 71.9 percent of employed students placed in jobs related to their training.

However, GAO finds these measures may seriously overstate actual Job Corps performance. The program defines "completers" as those who finish only a portion of a vocational curriculum, in many cases less than half the course tasks mastered by those Job Corps calls "advanced completers." This semantic device boosts program performance figures but obscures an accurate view of vocational training relevance and effectiveness

And the GAO found questionable, even preposterous, attribution of training-related job placements. A student got a job as a janitor in a waffle restaurant, and the contractor claimed the placement as related to his Job Corps training as a bricklayer. A student trained as a diesel mechanic was claimed as a training match after placement as a stock checker at K-Mart. Of the placements GAO reviewed, they found more than 40 percent of the claimed training matches tenuous or erroneous. GAO said oversight of Job Corps contractors' placement claims appears inadequate.

Over the past 34 years, the Job Corps program has achieved much, and we expect much. Job Corps vocational training should be timely, complete and matched to placements in careers, not temporary jobs. And program accountability measures should capture the hard facts about the challenges faced by Job Corps in meeting its ambitious mission. No facade of inflated numbers should mask the true measure of how well the program serves those who need it most.

Albert Einstein observed, "Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted."

To be sure, the Job Corps' uniquely intense, residential program, and training in the "soft" job readiness skills so essential to success, can be of incalculable benefit to every participant who stays the course. Nevertheless, the substantial national commitment to the Job Corps program demands stronger accountability for results that link current vocational training to tomorrow's skilled jobs.

We look forward to the testimony of all our witnesses today on ways to strengthen Job Corps vocational training and performance standards.

Welcome.

Mr. SHAYS. At this time I would like to recognize a very active member of this committee and a very wonderful addition to the committee, Mr. Allen, from Maine.

Mr. ALLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate your calling this hearing on the Job Corps program. I commend you for your leadership in ensuring that our Federal dollars are spent in a cost-effective manner.

The Job Corps is over 30 years old and is the primary Federal program to help disadvantaged youths receive the educational, vocational and social skills they need to become more employable. During this hearing, we expect to hear about success of the Job Corps program and how to improve the program.

I believe we should always keep in mind that these are kids who will have an incredibly difficult time finding a job unless they receive some help. These are young people who face multiple obstacles to employment. Often they are poor, or high school dropouts, or without basic skills, or have limited English proficiency or may never have held a full-time job.

When evaluating the Job Corps program and how it operates, we must also consider the alternatives to the way Job Corps currently functions. We should not only consider alternatives to the way service providers contract with the Federal Government, but also what would happen to these kids in the absence of the Job Corps.

Prison costs over $20,000 per year. Welfare checks for years to come are likewise costly. My point is simply that the Job Corps is essentially an attempt to protect our young people from chronic unemployment. So while we must examine how the program operates and how successfully it meets its objectives, the bottom line is to help disadvantaged kids develop the skills they need to find and keep good jobs.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity to learn more about the Job Corps and look forward to working with you on this matter. Thank you very much.

Mr. SHAYS. I thank the gentleman.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Thomas H. Allen follows:]

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OPENING STATEMENT OF
REPRESENTATIVE TOM ALLEN
BEFORE THE GOVERNMENT REFORM AND OVERSIGHT SUBCOMMITTEE ON
HUMAN RESOURCES

JULY 29, 1998

Mr. Chairman, thank you for calling this hearing on the Job Corps program. I commend you on your leadership in ensuring that our federal dollars are spent in a cost effective manner.

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When evaluating the Job Corps program and how it operates, we must also consider the alternatives to the way Job Corp currently functions. We should not just consider alternatives to the way service providers contract with the federal government, but we must also consider what would happen to these kids in the absence of Job Corps. Prison costs over $20,000 a year. Welfare checks for years to come are likewise costly. My point is simply that Job Corps is, essentially, an attempt to protect our young people from chronic unemployment. So while we must examine how the program operates and how successfully it meets its objectives, the bottom line is to help disadvantaged kids develop the skills they need to find and keep a good jobs.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity to learn more about Job Corps and look forward to working with you on this matter. Thank you.

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Mr. SHAYS. At this time I would recognize another very fine member of the committee and a new member, Mr. Kucinich. Actually you're not new, it's 2 years. You're both experienced veterans now.

Mr. Kucinich.

Mr. KUCINICH. A pleasure to join you. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I welcome the second of our committee's hearings on Job Corps.

The Job Corps offers an intensive training program, emphasizing skills that increase employability. This is an invaluable resource for economically disadvantaged youths in highly disruptive environments. Job Corps offers an environment in which individuals who wish to succeed are given the opportunity to do so, through hard work.

In particular, Mr. Chairman, I welcome a close look at the performance of national training contractors. Questions have been raised as to whether NTC programs are any more successful in placing Job Corps participants in jobs or apprenticeships than other contract training programs. The figures that I've seen indicate that NTC programs place a higher percentage of participants in full-time jobs and in vocational apprenticeship positions.

I expect our witnesses will shed some light on this issue. As it represents our Nation's largest investment in at-risk youths, the Job Corps program's continued success is imperative.

Mr. Chairman, I'm pleased that the subcommittee has chosen to devote its attention to this matter. And I look forward to the discussion. Thank you.

Mr. SHAYS. I thank the gentleman.

Let me just get some housekeeping out of the way and ask unanimous consent that all members of the subcommittee be permitted to place an opening statement in the record, and the record will remain open for 3 days for that purpose. Without objection so ordered.

I ask further unanimous consent that all witnesses be permitted to include their written statements in the record. Without objection, so ordered.

I also ask that the record reflect that the subcommittee has received a large number of letters from employers, Job Corps students and trainers in support of union national training contractors. The letters will be part of the hearing record and kept in the subcommittee's hearing file. So we will provide that.

Before calling our witnesses, I want to say up front, since it's no secret, I'm a strong supporter of Job Corps, but I really am going to be very diligent about making sure that we are up front with each other on how we are going to keep our numbers and how we evaluate the program. I also want to thank, at the same time, Ms. Silva, for appearing for GAO, because GAO is writing a report that is somewhat critical. The purpose is not to do anything other than really understand what this report says and does and go from there.

So at this time I would ask Ms. Mary Silva, national director of Job Corps, and Ms. Cornelia Blanchette, associate director of U.S. General Accounting Office, and if you would remain standing, be-

cause, as you know, we swear in our witnesses. If there's anyone else that would be as well testifying.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you. I'm going to move you down, Ms. Silva so you can all sit in those same chairs, if that's all right. And even though there are three in one, that's not the way we view it. We'll get equal time in here.

It's wonderful to have our ranking member here, Mr. Towns.

Before inviting you, Ms. Silva, to present your testimony, I'll ask Mr. Towns if he has any—would you like to read your statement and make a statement?

Mr. TOWNS. No; Mr. Chairman. I would just like to ask special permission to put my opening statement in the record. I apologize for being late. I was in a very serious telephone call, which I could not break.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Edolphus Towns follows:]

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OPENING STATEMENT
REP. ED TOWNS
SUBCOMMITTEE RANKING MEMBER

JULY 29, 1998

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding today's hearing on the Job Corps program. The average Job Corps student is a seventeen year old high school drop out who has never held a job. His chances of returning to a traditional school or getting a job are limited because his reading and math skills are below an eighth grade level. Unfortunately, he cannot rely on a great deal of support or guidance because his family is poor and dysfunctional. This is a young man who has never known success or responsibility. Job Corps gives him both. So forgive me if I am an ardent defender of the program. You may know that it could be better, but I know how much worse we could be without it.

This is the Subcommittee's second hearing on Job Corps. The first hearing focused on the performance of recruitment and placement contractors. At that hearing, some people were troubled by Job Corps' 33% drop out rate. The drop out rate for private vocational training is

50%. Therefore, Job Corps has a better retention rate than private trade schools. Additionally, Job Corps students who complete their vocational program, are five times more likely to obtain a training related job with a wage that is 25% higher than non-Job Corps attendees. I said then and I will say again, instead of looking at the 33% drop out rate, focus on the 67% success rate.

Now today, we are here to talk about sole source contracts. Mr. Chairman, contracts that are awarded without full and open competition raise questions. However, the Department of Labor requested bids for these contracts. The solicitation was publicly advertised with clear guidance on the contract requirements. These contracts were not secretly solicited or awarded.

Mr. Chairman, to consider whether a sole source award was justified, we should first determine whether there are any credible competitors. One source of competition are the various trade schools throughout the country. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the average costs for tuition and fees at a trade school is $6,720 per year. Most programs are for two years which would bring the total tuition cost to $13,440. With even modest living expenses of $5000 per year, this raises the total costs above the Job Corps program. Further, Mr. Chairman, the effectiveness of these schools is largely unknown because

the Department of Education does not collect placement rate data. However, the student loan default rate of 23% may serve as an indication of graduate employability. Therefore, the trade schools are not likely competitors. Mr. Chairman, while I share your concern about sole source awards, the particular requirements of the program and the nature of the industry may justify the sole source designation.

I am not the apologist for Job Corps. I believe that the program can be improved. For instance, we should examine why the programs managed by the Civilian Conservation Corps, cost 27% more to run than other programs. Additionally, in preparation for this hearing I discovered a disturbing report by the Department of Labor's Inspector General that found serious problems in the health and dental care received by Job Corps participants. The report alleged that some centers failed to even have basic first aid kits in their infirmaries. Mr. Chairman, I believe that we should work together to assure that the health care received by these young people is adequate and appropriate. I hope I can count on your support to assure that these young people get the health care they deserve.

Again, Mr. Chairman, thank your for holding today's hearing. I look forward to hearing the testimony of our witnesses.

Mr. SHAYS. Well, you were well represented by your two other colleagues. One of the interesting things about this committee, given the death of one of our members, we have an equal number of Republicans and Democrats. Frankly, that suits me just fine.

Ms. Silva, you have the floor.

STATEMENTS OF MARY H. SILVA, NATIONAL DIRECTOR, JOB CORPS; AND CORNELIA BLANCHETTE, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, U.S. GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE, ACCOMPANIED BY SIGURD NILSEN, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, AND BARRY BEDRICK, ASSOCIATE GENERAL COUNSEL, OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL

Ms. SILVA. Thank you very much. Chairman Shays, Congressman Towns and other subcommittee members, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to further the discussion about how we can improve the Job Corps program and how we can ensure that the vocational training we offer continues to be relevant and appropriate to local labor markets.

I'm going to submit my complete written testimony for the record, but I would like to summarize and highlight three areas this morning. First of all, Job Corps' mission. I think it's important that we keep the mission in front of us at all times, and our mission is to ensure that young people make a successful transition to employment and also that they're enabled to achieve self-sufficiency.

The students that we serve in Job Corps, carrying out this mission, 68,000 young people every year, represent a vital part of America's future. One hundred percent of these young people are economically disadvantaged; 80 percent of the students we serve are high school dropouts; two-thirds of the young people ages 16 to 24 that we serve have never held a full-time job. We serve approximately 72 percent minorities, and 58 percent of our participants are young men.

With these participants, we strive to build winners one day at a time, one student at a time. We use open entry, open exit, individually paced instruction in academic and vocational training areas for these young people. We focus particularly on employability and life skills, and we provide a holistic environment for these young people to be able to achieve as much as they can in their search for self-sufficiency. So that's the first point in our mission and our students.

Second, Job Corps is a national program. We have 113 Job Corps centers in all but four States. We serve young people from thousands of communities across the country, and because of this national program, we develop and implement systems to ensure that our vocational training is relevant to local labor markets. We develop systems, such as systems to select vocational offerings; systems to select vocational training providers; systems to develop competency-based training for all of our young people, where they get individual training achievement records; and a vocational evaluation system by which to hold our vocational training providers accountable.

But in addition to developing and implementing systems, we continually try to improve these systems based on input from the

GAO, based on input from the IG, based on input from the Hill and our own self-assessments. And there are several initiatives that we have under way that speak to our improving our systems. Indeed these are a national initiative to increase the employer involvement throughout Job Corps, to introduce the O*NET job classification system, so that we can better manage and monitor our job training matches, and to increase the performance standards by which we will hold our national training contractors accountable.

In addition, we are—we received $15 million in our appropriations so that we can enhance and modernize our vocational training beginning this year. So we will continue to improve these systems.

The third area really, recognizing the sizable Federal investment in Job Corps for our Nation's at-risk youth, we hold ourselves accountable for performance. We are a program that focuses on performance and results for the young people in the program. We have been developing an outcome measurements system for our center operators, for our placement contractors, for our admissions contractors and for our vocational training providers. We have been developing this system incrementally over the last decade.

In addition, we have goals, which focus in the short term on employment and wages and the longer term we look at job retention and earnings. Again we hold ourselves accountable for results. We look forward to discussing ways in which we can improve. We look forward to implementing pending legislation on the Hill for work force investment changes.

With that, I close my remarks and welcome any questions that you might have.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you, Ms. Silva.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Silva follows:]

STATEMENT OF MARY H. SILVA
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF JOB CORPS
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION
BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES AND
INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM AND OVERSIGHT

July 29, 1998

Chairman Shays, Congressman Towns, and Subcommittee members, thank you for the opportunity to appear today to discuss Job Corps -- the nation's largest and oldest comprehensive residential training program for seriously at-risk youth. Job Corps offers a holistic approach to addressing the academic, vocational and social skills needs of our students, all of which serve to enhance their employability. I am pleased to provide you today with information on the operation of Job Corps' vocational training program, one of the three key components of the Job Corps model. I will also address the selection of training providers and the extent to which Job Corps and Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) objectives are being met. I will then describe Department of Labor initiatives to enhance Job Corps' training curriculum and ensure its continuing relevance to current labor market needs. In addition, I will present information regarding National Training Contractors (hereafter referred to as NTCs) that provide training at many Job Corps Centers.

Many young people need assistance in making the transition to the world of work and adulthood. This is particularly true of the more than 68,000 young people who choose to enroll in Job Corps each year. By definition, all Job Corps students are economically disadvantaged and face significant roadblocks to becoming economically self-sufficient. In other words, they face challenges to securing and holding jobs that lead to successful careers. Nearly 80 percent of participants are high school dropouts; 64 percent have never held a full-time job; and just over a

third are members of families receiving public assistance. Seventy-two percent of Job Corps students are minorities and 58 percent are young men. Eighty-seven percent live on a Job Corps center. Job Corps operates 113 such centers which serve students from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

Job Corps, the Nation's largest investment in at-risk youth, has a thirty-four year history of success in providing education and training to enable youth to make better futures for themselves and their families. This is a record of great accomplishment, and one of which we are very proud. Still, we seek to build on this record of recognized achievement by continually looking for new and more effective ways to meet the critical challenges facing the young people we serve.

I am prepared today to discuss several aspects of Job Corps' vocational programs. I will focus on providing a summary of our activities and initiatives in each of the following areas: (1) how vocational training providers are selected; (2) the systems in place to assess performance of training providers and hold them accountable; and (3) ongoing efforts to update and improve Job Corps training and curricula.

Overview of High-Quality Training Providers

Job Corps operates 1,635 individual vocational classes, covering approximately 100 occupational areas, at 113 centers nationwide. The total cost for operating these programs is $144 million. Included in this total operating cost are Job Corps contracts with NTCs -- specifically eight national unions, or union affiliates, and one building industry association -- to provide training at selected Job Corps centers across the country. This training is primarily in the construction trades, but these NTCs also offer advanced training in automotive repair and in

clerical and computer-based occupations. National training contracts account for 527 classes, 32 percent of Job Corps' total vocational programing, and $50.3 million of Job Corps' total vocational training investment of $144 million. These training contracts, which are awarded in accordance with Federal acquisition law and procurement regulations, provide us with vital access to national networks -- through the unions and the Home Builders Association -- for both union and non-union jobs. These organizations offer high-quality instruction that is recognized by employers, and they provide opportunities for Job Corps students to be placed in high paying jobs.

Most Job Corps centers reflect a mix of light industry occupations, such as clerical careers, computer operation, health services, and culinary arts; as well as heavy industry trades, such as carpentry, painting, and bricklaying. Decisions about the specific mix of vocational programs at each of the 113 Job Corps centers are made at the local level, with review and approval by our regional and national offices. The process for recommending and receiving approval on a specific vocational mix normally begins with the local center and the Job Corps regional office. These entities work together to determine the most appropriate vocational training programs for that center, based on careful analysis of local labor market information, employer input, and the skill levels of prospective students. These recommendations are then submitted to the national office for review, comment and a careful analysis to ensure that any facility-related and/or equipment costs are not prohibitive. Every effort is made to reach an agreement that is acceptable to all parties. In the case of newly selected centers, this information is also useful to the architects who design the vocational facilities that will house the various training programs.

For each trade, the choice of service provider occurs at the local level. The initial discussion involves the local community, the regional office, and the center operator, if selected. In the case of the trades offered by NTCs, an assessment is made as to whether an NTC or local provider would be more appropriate. This assessment is based in large part on a comparison between NTCs and local providers in areas such as job placement prospects and expected wages, as well as the viability of NTC connections with local union and industry organizations. Recommendations to use an NTC are submitted to the national office for final review and approval. With respect to existing centers, if the center operator and local community, regional office and NTC are in agreement that an NTC-operated program is reasonable, a request for an NTC to provide the training would likely be approved. The national and regional offices in these cases ensure that the request for an NTC is reasonable in terms of performance and costs. It must be emphasized that an NTC program is never established at a center without local impetus. When local communities and center operators prefer to use local vocational training providers, those preferences are accommodated.

Once a vocational program at a given Job Corps center is in place, center operators are responsible for regularly assessing the performance of each training program and keeping abreast of the labor market needs in the communities from which the students originate and to which they are most likely to return. Consistent with this responsibility, vocational changes can be made in accordance with established procedures. However, the primary reason for requesting and approving a change in vocational programs is performance. Centers and regions monitor performance of vocational programs on an on-going basis, using data from the Job Corps Management Information System. The nature of this data and the aspects of performance being

measured are discussed in the next section. Vocational program changes are proposed when performance does not meet expectations. Centers may also propose changes based on an analysis of labor market information that indicates greater placement potential in a trade not currently offered at the center. Centers and regions follow a detailed approach in documenting reasons for, and making decisions on, vocational changes. Part of that approach entails working with placement contractors and employers to confirm the existence of reasonable employment potential. As a result of the 1998 appropriation, in which the Congress provided Job Corps with $15 million for the modernization of Job Corps vocational classes, we have significantly enhanced our capacity to provide students with vocational training that more specifically meets the needs of employers, yields higher placement rates, and generates more stable and better jobs for Job Corps students.

Comprehensive Performance Management and Accountability

Job Corps has developed and implemented a comprehensive management system to evaluate the performance of individual vocational training programs, whether the training is conducted by local providers or NTCs. The system establishes standards on an annual basis and tracks performance for the following student outcomes: completion of vocational training, placement into jobs or school, placement into full-time employment or training, placement into jobs related to their specific training, and the average hourly wage received by students placed in jobs. Each of these measures is assigned a performance range, and programs falling below the low end of the range are considered to be under-performing and in need of corrective action. Programs falling within the range are meeting expectations, and those that exceed the range are identified as outstanding performers. The system is designed so that one-fourth of all vocational

programs will be targeted for corrective action to improve performance. Training providers understand this concept and, in most instances, work aggressively so that current-year performance greatly improves upon that of the previous year. As a result, the number of programs ultimately identified as needing improvement is less than 25 percent in any one year. The incentive imbedded in this system drives all of our vocational programs toward continuous improvement.

Any program that fails to meet minimum performance levels is formally notified about performance deficiencies and provided with an opportunity to identify extenuating circumstances that may have caused the shortfalls. Absent such circumstances, programs are placed on probation for one year. If the training is conducted by a local provider, a program is allowed to remain on probation for two consecutive years before it is replaced, particularly if there is demonstrated improvement in performance. NTCs, on the other hand, are held to stricter accountability. Programs operated by NTCs that are placed on probation have only one year to raise performance to acceptable levels before being replaced.

Other evaluation factors applied to NTCs that are worth noting include: (1) higher numerical standards for two national training contractors operating advanced programs in automotive repair and business clerical occupations; (2) contractual requirements for NTCs to place as many students as possible in apprenticeship opportunities; and (3) a directive to maximize training and placement opportunities for female students. Further, beginning with PY 1998, standards for all programs offered by NTCs will be higher than those established for training offered by other providers.

Overall, Job Corps' vocational training programs have consistently met performance expectations in accordance with the performance goals mandated by the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA). During the most recently completed program year (1997), this continued emphasis on student outcomes enabled Job Corps to achieve the following results: 82.3 percent of all students reporting to and terminating from a vocational training program were placed in a job or further education and training; 81.7 percent of those placed were in full-time jobs or training; and 71.9 percent of students placed in jobs obtained jobs related to their training. Those students placed in a job received an average hourly wage of $6.66 at the time of placement. Finally, 64.5 percent of all students leaving a vocational program were completers.

Overall, we are very pleased with the accomplishments of our training providers. It is noteworthy, however, that students trained by NTCs had, on average, better outcomes for key measures. Students leaving programs administered by NTCs had a higher rate of full-time placements than students leaving training conducted by local providers (85 percent vs. 81 percent), were placed in a greater proportion of jobs related to training (78 percent vs. 70 percent), and received a higher average hourly wage ($7.19 vs. $6.49). The wage differential was even higher for those students placed in jobs related to their training ($7.55 vs. $6.68). Moreover, apprenticeship jobs accounted for 37 percent of all full-time job placements for NTC-trained students, compared to 10 percent for students in all other center-provided training.

The wage area warrants further mention because the average student placed in a job following NTC training receives nearly 11 percent more in hourly wages than students placed from other center training. The differential rises to 13 percent when comparing students placed

in jobs related to training. In our judgement, these differences are directly related to the partnership of Job Corps' NTCs with unions and organizations representing business and industry. NTC instructors are typically highly experienced in their trade, maintain productive linkages with local and regional employers, and are continually improving their knowledge of industry skill requirements. These data also demonstrate the continued value for Job Corps students of providing construction-related training. According to Bureau of Labor Statistics data, employment in construction was 5.4 million in 1996 and is projected to be 5.9 million in 2006, an increase of 9 percent. This indicates both growth and high volume of opportunity in a well-paying occupational area.

With respect to performance measurement there are two issues which require clarification. One deals with how we define vocational completer and the other is how we determine job training match. Job Corps develops a Training Achievement Record (TAR) for each vocational program offered at a Job Corps center. Depending on the vocation, a TAR can have over a hundred skill areas which a student must master in order to qualify for employment opportunities. These TARs identify what we refer to as "step-off" levels. Each step-off level represents a set of skills which, if mastered, qualifies the student for a particular occupational area. A student who attains a step-off level is considered a vocational completer. On any particular TAR there are several step-off levels. The step-offs are organized in hierarchical fashion so that students who master all the competencies on the TAR are considered advanced completers qualifying them for higher quality jobs.

For example, if a student enters into the Job Corps Clerical Program, he/she could master skill areas associated with word processing (i.e. creating and merging documents, preparing a

printer for single or continuous feed). Once these and other associated skills are mastered, the student would have met the requirements for the word processing step-off level and be fully qualified for employment in that field. If the student masters all other skills associated with the remaining step-off levels in the TAR for the Job Corps Clerical Program, he/she would be qualified for employment as a secretary.

The organization and content of each TAR are developed by convening Industry Advisory Groups (IAGs) made up of representatives of the business community and Job Corps vocational and education staff. These industry groups review and update the competencies that students must master to obtain entry-level employment, the curriculum materials and instructional methods to be used, the equipment needed to provide relevant training consistent with technological advancements and necessary changes to step-off levels consistent with labor market demands. These industry groups meet every three to five years for our larger vocational offerings.

Regarding job training matches, that is, the relationship between the job a student is placed in and the training the student received, we have been concerned with how some of those matches have been reported. The system currently in use is based upon the Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT), developed by the United States Employment Service, and the Classification of Instructional Programs. The use of these systems is cumbersome and has been difficult to manage and monitor satisfactorily. The DOT involves over 14,000 individual occupational codes. It was clear that change was needed for Job Corps to improve the credibility of our reported job training matches. Therefore, Job Corps is moving toward a new occupational classification system known as O*NET, which the Employment and Training

Administration initiated and is based on an analysis of the skills needed for a variety of jobs within broad categories of occupations. This will make the determination of job training matches more manageable and easier to oversee. This system is expected to be implemented in Job Corps in the Fall of 1998 Further, we are prepared to institute appropriate monitoring procedures to instill greater accountability for those responsible for reporting job training matches.

In addition to the numerical methods of measuring Job Corps performance it also should be noted that students, as part of their vocational training, make a significant contribution to center and community enhancement projects. These construction efforts and community service activities enable Job Corps students to learn invaluable skills and benefit local communities in the process. For the period between January 1997 and April 1998, construction projects performed by students were valued at over $36 million dollars. In addition, our students registered over 3.5 million volunteer hours in community service events such as blood drives, food drives and cultural arts performances. Community leaders have expressed real appreciation for Job Corp's willingness to play a meaningful role in their communities. Job Corps centers are a part of many communities and the centers and students recognize the responsibilities and rewards of contributing to community development efforts.

Updating and Improving Job Corps Training and Curricula

To ensure that our vocational training programs meet industry needs for workers with up-to-date knowledge and skills, Job Corps has, since 1984, followed a regular process for revising industry-certified tasks lists, or Training Achievement Records (hereafter referred to as TARs), for our vocational training programs. These TARs help us to maintain quality training and accountability throughout Job Corps. Presently, student competency lists, equipment, and

curriculum materials are reviewed and updated on a three- to five-year cycle, as dictated by industry changes and the volume of students served by a given trade. Vocational programs targeted for updating are discussed at national Industry Advisory Group meetings, which are attended by industry representatives and Job Corps vocational and academic instructors. Beginning this year, there will be as many as five employer representatives participating in discussions related to each trade being addressed. Our practice is to update the curricula for five currently-offered vocations each year and develop competency statements and related curricula for two to five new occupational offerings. New programs are selected through an analysis of labor market information that is used to identify new occupations and high-volume trades. This information is then made available to all of our centers, and they are encouraged to assess their own vocational mix and local labor market needs and initiate changes as warranted.

Job Corps has also initiated a vocational competency testing project to better prepare our students to compete in the workforce. The tests are being developed by an independent, impartial third party and will help center training staff determine whether students are learning what they are taught. The tests will also serve to identify student training deficiencies and instructional content areas that require improvement, so that immediate remedial action can be initiated. Tests are developed in accordance with standards established by the American Psychological Association, with full participation by industry representatives and Job Corps instructors. By the end of 1999, competency tests will be in place for 17 trades, accounting for over 80 percent of the training slots offered by Job Corps.

Through project-based learning, structured learning on the job, and other active learning methods, centers are improving the learning process and the long-term employability prospects

for students. At each center, courses are being enriched to allow students to learn relevant academic, vocational and social skills in the context of "real world" experience. And, at employer work sites, students not only practice the skills they have gained at the Job Corps center, but they develop new skills demanded by industry. This hands-on experience also enables students to gain social competence. Job Corps is moving in other directions to involve employers in our training and to provide students with training experiences in actual employment settings. For instance, at 63 of our centers, we have established a full-time, two-year position dedicated to coordinating and developing work-based learning opportunities in the business community and integrating our academic and vocational curricula.

Our efforts have brought employers -- their experience and their expertise -- into the delivery of training for Job Corps students. For instance our Gary Job Corps Center in Texas, we began a partnership with Quaker State/Q Lube in 1997. As a result of this partnership, the Gary center remodeled a trade shop into an exact replica of a Q Lube fast-lubrication station. The replica is regulation size, includes an underground workbay, and features all of the equipment regularly used by Q Lube, including tools, oils and lubes, service forms, and computer billing systems. Students even wear bright green Q Lube uniforms during their training experience. Students who complete this training program become Certified Automotive Lubrication Technicians and are placed directly into local shops. Because qualified technicians are very much in demand by Q Lube, we expect that this partnership will continue to grow and benefit both our students and the company.

In Kansas City, Missouri, a connection has been established between Citicorp Credit Services and the Transportation-Communications International Union (TCU) to train Job Corps

students as Customer Service Professionals. Students acquire skills in handling calls concerning credit status, billing, account balances and questions related to marketing, rates and fees. In this fast-paced environment, a student may handle up to 150 calls per day. In the process, students are gaining experience in computer applications, communications, mathematics, creative problem-solving and teamwork, all within an environment of high work standards.

At the Cass Job Corps Center in Arkansas, the International Union of Operating Engineers has joined forces with a local construction company to combine classroom instruction and practical work experience. Students participating in this work-based training earn $14.30 per hour while learning to operate various hoisting equipment, convey appropriate hand signals, and decipher load charts.

Last year, we launched an employer initiative in our Midwest region to increase employer involvement in all phases of Job Corps operations, including training and curriculum development. This effort focuses on recognition of Job Corps as an economic institution that can benefit a business' bottom line. The goal of the initiative is for employers to become involved in the program according to their individual interest, needs and capacity. Potential forms of employer involvement include providing on-the-job training and work experience, helping to shape Job Corps curriculum, providing job shadowing opportunities for students, addressing student assemblies on career possibilities and enabling academic teachers to see firsthand how academics are applied at the worksite. Thus far, approximately 700 employers have been contacted, resulting in over a thousand commitments to some level of involvement. These employer connections will be further developed so that Job Corps receives the maximum benefit from this initiative. We are firmly convinced that employers provide Job Corps with the

ultimate reality check on our vocational mix, the content of our training, and our training delivery methods.

It should be noted that in our interaction with employers, it has also become apparent that one of the most important factors in making a hiring decision is employability skills. When considering a candidate for a job, employers have informed us that they are looking for signs of dependability, reliability, punctuality, a positive attitude, attention to personal appearance and the ability to work as part of a team. These "soft" skills are viewed as being equal to, if not more important than, occupation-specific skills. Job Corps continues to respond to these concerns through the development, implementation, and revision of a comprehensive social skills training program. This program includes instruction in over 40 specific work-related social skill areas including managing conflict, dealing with change, expressing anger constructively, relating to peers, making decisions, demonstrating leadership and maintaining a professional appearance. To be successful in the job market, it is clear that our students must possess not only specific job skills but the related social skills as well.

Conclusions

We recognize the challenges inherent in offering quality vocational programming as part of the comprehensive range of services we deliver to disadvantaged youth. We are acutely aware of our responsibility to update and modernize our training in accordance with technological advances and changing employer demands. Our success in this regard will ensure that students are well-prepared to be productive, lifelong performers in the job market. It is for these reasons that we have systems in place to design vocational programs with input from employers and the community, to assess the performance of these programs, to hold providers accountable for poor

performance, to replace programs that perform poorly, and to upgrade curricula in keeping with--and in anticipation of--changing labor market needs.

New bipartisan legislation -- the Workforce Investment Act or H.R. 1385 -- which is currently in Conference, contains provisions that would make the Job Corps program even more successful. This important legislation -- which is a top priority of the Clinton Administration -- strengthens linkages among Job Corps centers, employers, the State workforce development systems and the local communities in which they are located. It assures that applicants are assigned to centers nearest to where they reside, with certain exceptions. It also assures that Job Corps students learn occupational skills in demand in their "home" labor market areas. In addition, the legislation establishes post-placement performance standards for Job Corps centers.

Mr. Chairman, we look forward to working with you to continue to improve the Job Corps program. This concludes my prepared statement. At this time, I would be pleased to answer any questions that you or any Subcommittee members have.

Mr. SHAYS. We will now go to Ms. Blanchette and hear your comments, and then we will try to sort out where we're in agreement and where we're in disagreement.

Ms. BLANCHETTE. Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee, we're pleased to be here today to assist the subcommittee in its oversight of Job Corps. Accompanying me are Sigurd Nilsen, who leads our Job Corps work, and Barry Bedrick of our Office of General Counsel.

My testimony will focus on Job Corps' vocational training services. Specifically, I will first describe Labor's efforts to ensure the appropriateness of vocational training and its relevance to local labor markets. Second, I will discuss the extent to which program participants are completing vocational training programs and obtaining jobs related to the training received. In addition, as the subcommittee requested, I will discuss the appropriateness of Labor's use of sole source procurement for a substantial portion of this training. My testimony is primarily based on a study we are conducting at the request of the subcommittee.

To ensure the appropriateness of Job Corps's vocational training to local labor markets and its relevancy to employer needs, Labor has several activities to foster Job Corps employer and community linkages. For example, Labor uses industry advisory groups regularly to review vocational course curricula. Labor also has a school-to-work initiative to link Job Corps with local employers, an initiative that has combined center-based training with actual work site experience at more than half of the Job Corps centers.

In addition, Labor involves local business and community leaders in deciding which vocational training programs to offer at newly established Job Corps centers. For example, vocational training decisions for one new center we visited were made with input from representatives of the mayor's office, local education agencies, local businesses, and other community-based organizations.

Along with these national efforts, three of Labor's regional offices have developed their own initiatives to improve linkages between Job Corps and local labor markets, and individual Job Corps centers have established linkages with employers. One regional office, for example, has two such initiatives. One, a welding program for the shipbuilding industry involves training at the Job Corps center in conditions similar to a shipbuilding worksite, testing by a shipbuilding company and additional training at the shipbuilding site. Under the other initiative, an automotive service program, the employer provides the equipment, the instructor, and the training curricula.

Job Corps reported that in program year 1996, 48 percent of its participants nationwide completed vocational training. However, Labor's definition of vocational completion is misleading. Only about 14 percent of the program year 1996 participants actually completed all of the required tasks of their vocational training program.

Each vocational training program in Job Corps has a comprehensive list of duties and tasks that participants are expected to perform. Job Corps policy permits participants to be classified as vocational completers if they accomplish the duties and tasks associated with any one segment of the vocational training program, regard-

less of whether they can perform all of the duties and tasks of the entire program. For example, in the food service vocational training program, accomplishing only the tasks associated with the first segment, that is, making a sandwich and preparing a salad, would qualify a participant as a vocational completer.

As shown in the first graph to your left, Job Corps' reported percentage of vocational completers nationwide, and at the five centers that we visited, the bars substantially overstated the percentage of participants who fully completed their vocational training programs, the shaded portion of the bars. Labor reported that in program year 1996, 62 percent of the participants nationwide who obtained employment found jobs that matched the job training they received.

At the five centers we visited, 63 percent of the job placements were reported as training-related; however, the validity of about 41 percent of these job training matches was questionable. As shown in the second graph, we questioned between one-quarter and two-thirds; that's the portion of each bar containing the diagonal lines, between one-quarter and two-thirds of the job placements that were reported to be related to the training participants received. That's the entire bars.

Our assessment based on our review—our assessment is based on our review of all the reported matches, and, for those that we found questionable, information obtained from telephone interviews with a random sample of 175 employers who had been reported as hiring the participants. As an example of a questionable placement, a participant trained in welding was reported as obtaining a job as a welding operator through a temporary agency, but the employer informed us that this individual was actually hired to shuttle vehicles between airports.

With regard to the sole source contracts, labor has been awarding such contracts to national labor and business organizations for vocational training for more than 30 years. It has not adequately justified, however, procuring these training services on a noncompetitive basis. The main reason Labor has justified awarding these contracts on a sole-source basis is that these organizations have a national placement network and are better able than nonnational organizations to place Job Corps participants who complete their training. Labor has provided no data, however, to support the extent to which these sole-source contractors actually place Job Corps participants nationwide.

Mr. Chairman, this completes my prepared statement. I will be happy to answer any questions.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Blanchette follows:]

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

We are pleased to be here today to discuss Job Corps, a $1 billion program administered by the Department of Labor that serves economically disadvantaged youths aged 16 to 24. For over 30 years, Job Corps has been helping young people who need and can benefit from an intensive program of education, training, and support services operated mainly in a residential setting. Job Corps is intended to prepare youths to either obtain and hold gainful employment, pursue further education or training, or satisfy entrance requirements for careers in the Armed Forces. Job Corps participants spend on average about 7 months in the program; per participant cost is on average about $15,000, making Job Corps the nation's most expensive job training program. Reasons for this high cost include the program's severely disadvantaged participants, who face many barriers to employment and its comprehensive services provided in a residential setting.

My testimony today focuses on Job Corps' vocational training services. Specifically, I will first describe Labor's efforts to ensure the appropriateness of vocational training and its relevance to local labor markets; second, I will discuss the extent to which program participants are completing vocational training programs and obtaining jobs related to the training received. In addition, as the Subcommittee requested, I will discuss our examination of the appropriateness of Labor's use of sole-source procurement for a substantial portion of this training. Much of my testimony is drawn from a study we are conducting at the request of the Subcommittee as well as from reports on the Job Corps program we have issued since 1995.[1]

In summary, Labor has several activities to foster Job Corps' employer and community linkages to ensure the appropriateness of its vocational training to local labor markets and its relevance to employer needs. Labor has industry advisory groups regularly review vocational course curricula to ensure its relevance for today's job market. Labor has also introduced a school-to-work initiative designed to link Job Corps with local area employers, combining center-based training with actual work site experience at more than half the Job Corps centers. In addition, Labor involves local business and community leaders in deciding which vocational training programs to offer at newly established Job Corps centers. In addition to these national efforts, three of Labor's regional offices have developed their own initiatives to improve linkages between Job Corps and local labor markets, including modifying vocational training to meet local employer needs.

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[1]Job Corps: Need for Better Enrollment Guidance and Improved Placement Measures (GAO/HEHS-98-1, Oct. 21, 1997); Job Corps: High Costs and Mixed Results Raise Questions About Program's Effectiveness (GAO/HEHS-95-180, June 30, 1995); Job Corps: Comparison of Federal Program With State Youth Training Initiatives (GAO/HEHS-96-92, Mar. 28, 1996); and Job Corps: Where Participants Are Recruited, Trained, and Placed in Jobs (GAO/HEHS-96-140, July 17, 1996)

Information reported by Labor, however, on the percentage of Job Corps participants who complete their vocational training and obtain jobs related to that training is misleading and overstates program results. Although Job Corps reported that in program year 1996,[2] 48 percent of program participants nationwide completed vocational training, our review concluded that only 14 percent of program participants had completed all requirements of their vocational training curricula. The rest of the participants that Job Corps counted as completing training had completed only some of the duties and tasks of a specific vocational training program. Labor also reported that 62 percent of the participants nationwide who obtained employment found jobs that matched the vocational training received in Job Corps. At the five centers we visited, however, the validity of about 41 percent of the job placements reported by Labor to be training related was questionable.

Finally, Labor has been awarding sole-source contracts to national labor and business organizations for vocational training for more than 30 years. It has not adequately justified, however, procuring these training services on a noncompetitive basis, according to our review. The main reason Labor has justified awarding these contracts on a sole-source basis is that these organizations have a national placement network and are better able than non-national organizations to place Job Corps participants who complete their training. Labor has provided no data, however, to support the extent to which these sole-source contractors actually place Job Corps participants nationwide.

BACKGROUND

Job Corps was established as a national employment and training program in 1964 to address employment barriers faced by severely disadvantaged youth. Job Corps enrolls youths aged 16 to 24 who are economically disadvantaged, in need of additional education or training, and living under disorienting conditions such as a disruptive home life. In program year 1996, the most recent year for which information was available, nearly 80 percent of the participants were high school dropouts and almost two-thirds had never worked full time. Participating in Job Corps can lead to youths' placement in a job or enrollment in further training or education. It can also lead to educational achievements such as attaining a high school diploma and learning reading or math skills. In program year 1996, Job Corps provided comprehensive services to more than 68,000 youths. Labor reported that 80 percent of these youths were placed in employment, joined the armed services, or enrolled in full-time schooling.

Job Corps is one of a few remaining federally administered training programs. It uses four sets of contracts–three are awarded on a competitive basis, the fourth on a

[2]A program year begins on July 1 and ends on June 30 of the following year. A program year is designated by the year in which it begins. Thus, program year 1996 began on July 1, 1996, and ended on June 30, 1997.

sole-source basis. Specifically, Labor uses one set of competitive contracts for recruiting and screening new participants, another set for operating 84 of its 112 Job Corps centers nationwide, and a third set for placing youths in jobs or providing them additional training upon termination from the program.[3] Labor awards the fourth set of contracts on a sole-source basis to national labor unions and business organizations to conduct about a third of Job Corps' vocational training.[4]

Major corporations and nonprofit organizations manage and operate 84 Job Corps centers under contractual agreements with Labor. Labor selects these contractors through a competitive procurement process that takes into account a contractor's expertise, proposed costs, and prior program performance. In addition, the U.S. Departments of the Interior and Agriculture operate 28 Job Corps centers, called civilian conservation centers, on public lands under interagency agreements with Labor. Labor competitively awards a set of contracts for recruiting and screening Job Corps participants and another set of contracts for placing participants. Private contractors, the contractors operating Job Corps centers, and state employment service agencies are among the organizations that have been awarded these contracts. Vocational training may be provided in any combination of three ways. Most vocational training is offered by instructors that are Job Corps center staff; other training is taught by private providers under subcontract to the center. These providers typically include vocational schools and community colleges. The rest of vocational training is provided by national labor unions and business organizations under sole-source arrangements made directly with Labor.

Each Job Corps center provides participants with a wide range of services, including basic education, vocational skills training, social skill instruction, counseling, health care, room and board, and recreational activities. One unique feature of Job Corps is that, for the most part, it is a residential program. About 90 percent of the youths enrolled each year live at Job Corps centers and receive services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The premise for boarding participants is that most come from a disruptive home life; therefore, they can benefit from receiving education and training in a different setting where a variety of support services are available around the clock. The comprehensive services Job Corps provides make it a relatively expensive program. According to Labor's program year 1996 figures, the average cost per Job Corps participant was more than $15,000. Cost varies according to the length of time a participant stays in the program. Participants stay in the program for an average of about 7 months but may stay as long as 2 years. Labor estimates the cost for a participant who remains in the program for a year to be about $25,000.

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[3]"Placement" means getting a job, entering the military, returning to school, or entering another training program.

[4]The remaining two-thirds of the vocational training is provided by Job Corps center staff or by local training providers under subcontract to the Job Corps center.

Vocational training is an important element of the Job Corps program. This training is designed to offer individualized, self-paced, and open entry/open exit instruction to allow participants to progress at their own pace. Overall, Job Corps offers training in 100 different vocations. Although the number of vocations offered at any Job Corps center varies, most centers offer training in 7 to 10 different vocations. Some centers offer training in as few as 5 vocations, while one offers training in 31 different vocations. Some vocations are offered at most centers, while others are offered at only a single center. For example, over 80 percent of the centers offer training in business clerical, culinary arts, building and apartment maintenance, and carpentry. On the other hand, 35 vocations, including computer programmer, asphalt paver, barber, teacher aide, and cable television installer, are only offered at a single center.

Many centers also offer off-site advanced career training at such institutions as vocational schools, community colleges, and universities for participants who have been in the program for at least 6 months. Regardless of who provides the training, Job Corps requires all vocational training programs to use competency-based curricula that contain a series of skills, or competencies, that participants must accomplish. According to Labor officials, each vocational training program's curricula and required skills are regularly reviewed and updated by industry advisory groups consisting of business, industry, and training providers.

Program Goals in Response to the Results Act

The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 is aimed at improving performance of government programs. In a time of limited budgets, the Results Act is a powerful tool that disciplines program management by requiring agencies to clarify their missions, establish goals and a strategy for reaching them, measure performance, and report on their accomplishments. The Results Act requires virtually every executive agency to develop strategic plans that clearly define their mission and articulate comprehensive mission statements that define their basic purpose. It also requires agencies to establish long-term strategic goals as well as annual goals linked to them. Agencies must then measure their performance toward the goals they have set and report publicly on how well they are doing. In addition to monitoring their ongoing performance, agencies are expected to evaluate their programs and to use the results from these evaluations to improve the programs.

Beginning in fiscal year 1999, executive agencies are to use their strategic plans to prepare annual performance plans. These performance plans are to include annual goals linked to the activities cited in budget presentations as well as the indicators the agency will use to measure performance in reaching results-oriented goals. Annual performance plans connect the long-term goals of the strategic plan to daily activities. Agencies are subsequently to report each year on the extent to which goals have been met, provide an explanation if these goals have not been met, and present the actions needed to reach any unmet goals. Labor's plan includes separate plans for its units. The Employment and

Training Administration includes Job Corps in its performance plan, which has a goal of placing 75 percent of Job Corps participants in jobs or further education with an average wage of $6.50 an hour for those placed in jobs or the armed forces.[5]

EFFORTS TO ENSURE THE APPROPRIATENESS AND RELEVANCE OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Labor has several activities to foster Job Corps' employer and community linkages to ensure the appropriateness of vocational training to local labor markets and its relevance to employer needs. Since 1984, Labor has used industry advisory groups to regularly review vocational course curricula to ensure the relevance of course content to the job market. In program year 1995, Labor introduced a school-to-work initiative at three Job Corps centers, combining center-based training with actual work site experience. Labor expanded this initiative to another 30 centers in program year 1996 and an additional 30 centers in program year 1997. In addition, Labor involves local business and community leaders in deciding which vocational training programs to offer at newly established Job Corps centers. For example, one such new center that we visited had decided the vocations to be offered 2 years before the center's contract was awarded. The center's decisions on vocational training were made with input from local business and community leaders, including representatives of the mayor's office, the private industry council,[6] the school department, and local businesses. As a result of this decisionmaking process, this center does not offer many traditional Job Corps vocational programs such as clerical, culinary arts, landscaping, and building and apartment maintenance. Instead, it offers nine vocational training programs in such high-demand occupations as medical assistant, phlebotomy/EKG technician, and computer repair.

In addition to national efforts, three of Labor's regional offices have developed their own initiatives to improve linkages between Job Corps centers and area employers. For example, one regional office has two initiatives in place to modify training programs to meet the needs of local employers in the shipbuilding and automotive service

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[5]This same goal is also included in Labor's departmentwide performance plan overview. In addition to these measures, Labor uses other measures to assess the performance of Job Corps and its center operators, including the proportion of participants who complete their vocational training and the proportion of participants placed in jobs related to their vocational training.

[6]Under the Job Training Partnership Act of 1983, a private industry council, comprising representatives of private-sector employers, local education agencies, organized labor, rehabilitation agencies, community-based organizations, economic development agencies, and the public service employment agency, is appointed by local elected officials of each service delivery area and approves a job training plan designed to meet local employment and training needs.

industries. In both instances the employers had direct input into the vocational training curriculum and donated equipment for the training. One program–the welding program for the shipbuilding industry–involves students training at the Job Corps center under conditions similar to a shipbuilding work site. The shipbuilding company tests the students and then provides additional training at the shipbuilding site. In the automotive service program, the employer provides the equipment, the instructor, and the training curriculum. Both employers have hired graduates of these programs and are satisfied with their relationship with Job Corps.

Two other regional offices have tried to increase employer involvement with Job Corps. In one instance a regional office held a series of meetings with representatives of various employers and center staff to bridge the gap between the needs of private industry and the Job Corps program. These meetings led to recommended actions and suggested new strategies to resolve employer issues. In the other example, a regional office is sponsoring a project to increase employer involvement in all facets of the Job Corps operation, including curriculum development, customized training, work-based learning, mentoring, identifying workforce needs, and donating staff resources and equipment.

Individual Job Corps centers have also established linkages with employers. These linkages include negotiating with employers to provide furniture and vocational training equipment and contracting with employers to train and hire program participants. For example, one center obtained a four-wheel drive sport utility vehicle from an automobile manufacturer for students in the auto repair vocational training course. Local auto dealers, familiar with the center's linkages to the national automobile manufacturer, have also donated cars needing repair. In addition, local auto dealers have trained students through the school-to-work program and hired many Job Corps program participants. Another center holds monthly employer and community relations meetings during which approximately 200 local employers and community representatives attend a luncheon catered by the center's culinary arts students to discuss local employment opportunities and donate funds to benefit Job Corps participants.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING COMPLETION AND PLACEMENT IN TRAINING-RELATED JOBS

Data on vocational training completion and placement outcomes are misleading, and as a result two performance indicators that Labor uses to evaluate Job Corps' success are overstated. Labor reports that about 48 percent of all program participants nationwide complete their vocational training and that about 62 percent of the jobs obtained by program participants relate to the vocational training received. Only about 14 percent of program participants nationwide satisfied all their vocational training requirements, according to our review, and about 41 percent of the reported training-related job placements at the five centers we visited were questionable. Labor needs

complete and accurate program performance information for evaluating program success and for identifying areas needing improvement.[7]

Labor's Vocational Completion Designation Does Not Mean That All Vocational Training Tasks Were Completed

Job Corps reported that in program year 1996, 48 percent of its participants nationwide completed vocational training. The information Labor uses to define vocational completion, however, is misleading. Only about 14 percent of the program year 1996 participants actually completed all the required tasks of their vocational training programs, according to our review. Job Corps' national data system has three categories for identifying a participant's level of vocational training progress: trainee, completer, and advanced completer. A trainee is a participant who has not completed any vocational training component, a completer has accomplished at least one part of a vocational program, and an advanced completer has fully satisfied all required parts of a vocational training program. Participants in the last two categories are considered vocational training completers. Thus, Job Corps' reported statistics on vocational completers include participants who have only partially completed the required skills of their vocational training programs.[8]

Each vocational training program in Job Corps has a comprehensive list of duties and tasks that participants are expected to perform. For example, the clerical vocational training program has 140 duties and tasks that participants must accomplish to fully complete the program, food service has 109, and carpentry has 75. Each vocational training program is divided into several segments. For example, in the food service vocational training program, the first segment entails making a sandwich and preparing a salad (covering 39 of the 109 tasks); the second segment adds preparing breakfast dishes; heating convenience foods; preparing meats, poultry, fish, and pasta; and cooking vegetables; and the final segment adds preparing soups, sauces, and appetizers, as well as food management skills, such as preparing a menu, setting a table, developing a food preparation schedule, and conducting safety inspections.

Vocational training instructors assess participants' performance for each identified duty and task. Job Corps policy permits participants to be classified as vocational completers if they accomplish the duties and tasks associated with any one segment of

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[7]We also questioned the validity of 15 percent of the reported placements we sampled at six centers in GAO/HEHS-95-180, June 30, 1995.

[8]Placement in a job does not depend on a participant's completing any of the required skills of a vocational training program. Job Corps requires placement contractors to help all participants with placement regardless of how long they were in the program or the reason they left.

the vocational training program–regardless of whether they can perform all the duties and tasks required in the entire vocational training program. Depending on the vocation, the percentage of tasks that a participant must accomplish to be considered a completer ranges from virtually 100 percent–for the health occupations vocational training program–to about 25 percent for the welding program (see table 1).

Table 1: Number of Tasks Participants Have to Accomplish to be Considered Vocational Completers in Selected Vocational Training Programs

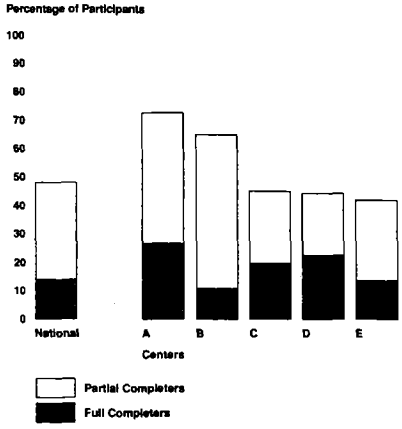
Vocation	Number of tasks required to fully complete training	Minimum number of tasks required to be considered a completer	Percentage of total tasks required to be considered a completer
Health occupations	189	179	95
Electrician	79	56	71
Painter	50	32	64
Carpentry	75	42	56
Building and apartment maintenance	123	64	52
Clerical	140	67	48
Landscaping	167	71	43
Bricklayer	64	26	41
Food service	109	39	36
Welding	128	36	28

Thus, Job Corps policy allows participants to be classified as vocational completers if they can perform some portion of the required curricula. For example, in the food service vocational training program, accomplishing only the tasks associated with the salad/sandwich making segment would qualify a participant as a vocational completer. At the centers we visited that had a food service program, nearly half of the reported vocational completers had completed only this first segment of the food service program. At the five centers overall, 43 percent of the vocational completers had completed only the first segment of their vocational training programs.

Job Corps' reported percentage of vocational completers at the five centers we visited substantially overstated the percentage of participants who fully completed their

vocational training programs. At the five centers, only about 1 in 3 reported vocational completers had actually completed all the vocational training requirements. The percentage of program year participants fully completing vocational training programs ranged from about 11 percent at one center to about 27 percent at another center. Nonetheless, these two centers had reported vocational completion rates of 65 and 73 percent, respectively (see fig.1).

Figure 1: Reported and Full Completion Rates for Vocational Training Nationwide and at Five Job Corps Centers, Fiscal Year 1996



Training-Related Job Placement Statistics Are Not Meaningful

Labor reported that in program year 1996, 62 percent of those placed in employment found jobs that matched the Job Corps training they received. Our review of this information at the five centers we visited, however, suggests that this overstates the program's accomplishments. At the five centers, 63 percent of the job placements were reported as training related; however, the validity of about 41 percent of these job training matches was questionable.

In checking this information, we first reviewed all the job placements at the five centers we visited to assess the validity of reported job training matches. We then verified our results by contacting a representative sample of employers who had hired the Job Corps participants.[9] We questioned job training matches because either the job title did not seem appropriate for the employer listed or the job title did not seem to relate to the vocational training. We then interviewed a random sample of 175 employers who had hired these Job Corps participants whose job placement was listed as related to the vocational training they received but that we questioned. Placements listed as training related but that we questioned included a participant placed as a cashier at a fast food restaurant after having received secretarial training and a participant placed at a gas station who had trained to be a bank teller.[10] Table 2 shows additional examples of jobs reported as being training related that we questioned.

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[9]We identified 598 questionable job training matches at the five centers. We contacted a random sample of 175 of the listed employers to verify information about the reported job placement and used the results of this sample to estimate the number of questionable matches. We estimate, at the 95 percent confidence level, that between 520 and 564 job training matches are questionable at these centers.

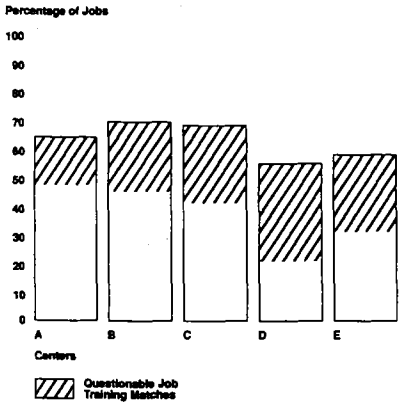
[10]We also questioned Job Corps' policy of providing an automatic job training match for any individual enlisting in the military, regardless of the assigned duties. At the five centers, military enlistments accounted for about 5 percent of the reported job training matches, although at one center about 13 percent of the reported job training matches were for military enlistments. However, we did not include these reported job training matches in our questionable category.

Table 2: Examples of Reported Job Training Matches We Questioned

Vocational training	Job placement	Employer
Accounting	Bank teller Linen room attendant	Cable Car Cleaners Sheraton Hotel
Auto repair	Detailer Wash boy	Vintage Car Wash Mesa Ford
Bricklaying	Janitor Material handler	Waffle House Roger's Supermarket
Carpentry	Municipal maintenance worker Stone polisher	Piggly Wiggly's grocery store Ro-An Jewelers
Clerical	Bank teller Cashier	McDonalds Dunkin Donuts
Diesel mechanic	Laundry machine washer Stock checker	Elks Lodge K-Mart
Electronic assembly	Car wash attendant Machine cleaner	Vintage Car Wash Baskin & Robbins
Food service	Housekeeper Personal attendant	Pilar De La Torre Consuelito's Boutique
Home health aide	Appointment clerk Information clerk	Vision Dry Cleaning Alamo Car Rental
Hotel/motel clerk	Fast food worker Ticket seller	McDonalds Regal Theaters
Medical assistant	Information clerk Sanitarian	Delia's Restaurant Wendy's
Painting	Janitor Material handler	McDonalds Federal Express
Plumbing	Assembler Material handler	Sealy Mattress United Parcel Service
Welding	Material handler Utility worker	Popeye's Chicken KC Pools

At the five centers we visited, we questioned between one-quarter and two-thirds of the job placements that were reported to be related to the training participants received. (See fig. 2.)

Figure 2: Reported and Questionable Training-Related Job Placement Rates at Five Job Corps Centers



Our discussions with employers provided examples of participants who seemed, on the basis of the reported job title, to have obtained jobs related to the training received. These participants, however, were actually hired to perform duties unrelated to their training; thus, they were erroneously reported as being placed in a job related to their training. For example, one participant trained in welding was reported as obtaining a job as a welding machine operator at a temporary agency, but the employer informed us that this individual was actually hired to shuttle vehicles between airports. Another participant trained in auto repair was reportedly hired as a petroleum and gas laborer, but the employer told us that the person was actually hired to clean residential homes. A third participant received clerical training and was reportedly hired as a sales correspondent, but the employer told us that the person actually sorted bad tomatoes from good ones on a conveyor belt. All three of these Job Corps participants, on the basis of the reported job title, had seemed to obtain jobs related to the training received, but they were actually hired to perform duties unrelated to their training; thus, they were erroneously reported as being placed in a job related to their training.

Labor's monitoring of reported job training matches appears to be inadequate. Labor officials stated that Job Corps regional offices monitor all aspects of placement contractor performance, but the offices have no fixed schedule for conducting such monitoring. Labor officials stated that regular desk reviews of all placement forms, both for accuracy and completeness, take place as part of the process of paying for vouchers submitted by placement contractors. On the basis of our findings, this procedure may not be adequate to ensure the accuracy of that reported information.

SOLE-SOURCE PROCUREMENT OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING SERVICES

At the Subcommittee's request, we reviewed Labor's justification for using sole-source procedures for procuring vocational training services through national training contractors and determined that Labor's justification fails to provide sufficient facts and rationale to support its claimed need to use noncompetitive procedures. Labor has contracted with national labor and business organizations under sole-source arrangements for more than 30 years. Currently, Labor has nine sole-source contracts with national labor and business organizations totaling about $46 million (see table 3). This represents about one-third of the expenditures for vocational training activities in program year 1996.

Table 3: National Training Contractors

Contractor	Year of initial award	Latest award (millions)	Number of training slots
AFL/CIO Appalachian Council	1974	$4.2	542
Home Builders Institute	1974	$13.5	4,090
International Brotherhood of Painters and Allied Trades	1969	$4.1	1,280
International Masonry Institute	1971	$3.5	910
International Union of Operating Engineers	1966	$2.5	450
National Plasterers and Cement Masons International Association	1970	$5.3	1,440
Transportation-Communication International Union	1972	$4.2	380
United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America	1968	$6.3	2,260
United Auto Workers	1978	$2.5	396
Total		**$46.1**	**11,748**

Federal procurement regulations require several conditions to be met for an agency to award a contract on a sole-source basis. These include (1) establishing the need for services that can be only provided by a specific entity, (2) documenting through a market survey or other basis that no other known entity can provide the required services, and (3) stating a plan of action the agency may take for removing barriers to competition in the future.

Labor used three broad considerations as justification for making sole-source awards in 1993 for about a third of Job Corps' vocational training rather than using full and open competition: (1) the contractor's past relationship with Job Corps, that is, experience with Labor's Employment and Training Administration in general and Job Corps, specifically, and thorough knowledge of Job Corps' procedures and operations; (2) the contractor's organizational structure, that is, a large nationwide membership related to a trade and its strong relationship with national and local apprenticeship programs; and (3) the contractor's instructional capability, that is, the availability of qualified and experienced instructors; ability to provide training specifically developed for the learning

level of Job Corps students; and the ability to provide recognition of training as credit toward meeting the requirements of becoming a journey-level worker. In addition, Labor officials have stated that a main reason for its justification for these sole-source awards is the contractors' maintaining an extensive nationwide placement network. Labor acknowledged that its national data system has no information to indicate the extent to which national training contractors were directly responsible for placing Job Corps participants in jobs.

Our review of Labor's current and proposed justification for its sole-source contracts and our previous work[11] on this issue raise questions about Labor's long-standing practice of awarding sole-source contracts. Labor's 1993 sole-source justification essentially lists the qualities Labor expects in a contractor. Labor lacks data to support its contention that contractors maintain an extensive nationwide placement network and failed to demonstrate that no other entity is available to bid on the contract. Labor's proposed justification for upcoming contracts has many of the weaknesses of the current justification.

CONCLUSIONS

Job Corps is an expensive job training program that provides comprehensive services to a severely disadvantaged population. For over 30 years, Job Corps has been helping young people who need and can benefit from an intensive program operated primarily in a residential setting. However, our work raises serious questions about Labor's claims about the program's achievements. Reported statistics on placement rates, the percentage of participants who are vocational completers, and the percentage of participants who obtained jobs related to the training they received are misleading and overstate Job Corps' results. The Labor Department and the Congress need meaningful and accurate information if they are to effectively manage and oversee the Job Corps program.

In addition, Labor has continued its long-standing practice of awarding sole-source contracts for a substantial portion of Job Corps' vocational training–a practice we suggested it re-evaluate in 1995. To date, Labor has failed to provide adequate support to justify sole-source procurement for vocational training services provided by the nine national labor and business organizations. Labor's justification for sole-source procurement does not explain or demonstrate the basis for Labor's determination of need.

We will be making recommendations to address these issues in a forthcoming report to the Subcommittee.

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[11]GAO/HEHS-95-180, June 30, 1995.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared statement. We would be happy to answer any questions that you or Members of the Subcommittee may have.

(205380)

Mr. SHAYS. Let me start by asking you, Ms. Blanchette—those two charts are helpful, but they're a little confusing to me, because in one case the plain represents the false, and the other the plain represents what's valid. So I'm just going to take say "Center A" under "Reported and Full Completion Rates for Vocational Training," the first one, what I basically see is that of 75 percent of participants, only about 30 percent actually were full completers.

Ms. BLANCHETTE. That's correct. For that center, Job Corps would have reported the 75 percent rate.

Mr. SHAYS. OK. And then under the second chart, about 65 percent, according to Job Corps, were placed, but in actual fact under "Center A," only about 48 percent actually had placement?

Ms. BLANCHETTE. That's correct, training-related placement.

Mr. SHAYS. This is a job that basically relates to the training they had?

Ms. BLANCHETTE. That's correct.

Mr. SHAYS. Now, that's the one-quarter that was inaccurate. If I go to D, you're almost two-thirds inaccurate. You're basically saying about 25 percent actually had a job related to their work? I'm under D.

Ms. BLANCHETTE. That's correct.

Mr. SHAYS. OK. Ms. Silva, when you look at those charts, what do you see?

Ms. SILVA. Let me take the first chart that deals with vocational completers. Job Corps in its definition——

Mr. SHAYS. Move your mic around here and talk to your mic, if you would.

Ms. SILVA. When Job Corps develops its training achievement records, it indicates on those training achievement records different step-off levels, which are considered completer levels within that field of training. So that from Job Corps' point of view, I look at the gray part on that left-hand chart as what we would call advanced completers, which is clearly designated on all of our training achievement records and all of the information that's submitted to our data system as advanced completers. These are young people who have completed all of the tasks on their training achievement records.

Mr. SHAYS. The only question I would ask is: Why you would do it that way?

Ms. SILVA. Because what we wanted to recognize is that we wanted to be able to have a training achievement record that was able to provide feedback and recognition to young people who complete a step-off level that has been considered—the step-off levels are developed through industry advisory groups, where we deal with Job Corps professionals and employers where we determine appropriate entry-level jobs from which students could leave Job Corps and find such employment. And so in consultation with employers, we have come up with these particular levels.

Mr. SHAYS. Would you basically dispute the fact in Center A that only 30 percent were true completers, that they completed the entire program?

Ms. SILVA. They completed all of the tasks on that particular training achievement level, 30 percent of them.

Mr. SHAYS. They were the only ones who completed the program?

Ms. SILVA. They completed all of those tasks.

Mr. SHAYS. But they're the only ones who completed—so this is where I'm going to get nervous with you. I am a supporter of Job Corps. I'm willing to go to Congress and say the statistics aren't as good as we thought, but we should fund these programs, because these are students who have dropped out of high school, et cetera. I've been to one of your programs, as you know, and I believe that this is a valuable program.

But I am hard-pressed to call anything more on Center A than 30 percent completers because the others didn't complete the program. If we start getting into a semantic battle about whether completing half the program means becoming a completer, and those who complete the entire program are advanced completers, that to me is saying someone graduated from high school when they only completed the sixth grade. They didn't complete it.

I'm going to listen how you respond to the other questioners, but if we get into this kind of a battle, it's going to be a long day.

Mr. Towns.

Mr. TOWNS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Let me begin by saying that there seems to be some confusion about the use of the term "completer." Can you tell us the different kinds of completers and what students must do to become a basic completer as compared to an advanced completer?

And let me say that I get the impression from Mrs. Blanchette that you have to be 100 percent. I remember when I went to school, there was a thing called magna cum laude, there was a thing called cum laude, and there was something called thank you, Lawd. Maybe, Ms. Silva, you can sort of help us here with this.

Ms. SILVA. We have on our vocational complete—on our training achievement records very clearly stated different tasks. And I don't mean to get into a disagreement in terms of semantics, but I think it's a conceptual framework where someone can be a completer as a receptionist or as a word processor. That is a very fine occupation. It can be a very fine entry job, where someone can leave Job Corps gaining the benefit of Job Corps as a completer in that area and not have completed the entire training achievement record which would be for a secretary.

We use the same training achievement record for those three categories, and it's very clearly designated which are the tasks that you need to have to complete the total level to become a secretary and which are those that you need to complete to become a receptionist or a word processor.

So it seems to me that that's a very important distinction that is more than a semantic difference, and I think it's important from my perspective to really be able to explain this.

Mr. TOWNS. Right.

Mr. Chairman, I'm prepared to yield to you.

Mr. SHAYS. Well, I know in college that you have an associates degree, and you might have a bachelor of arts, and then you have a graduate degree and a masters, and then you might have a Ph.D.

Mr. TOWNS. And you might get a certificate, too.

Mr. SHAYS. You might get a certificate as well, when you've completed a certificate. You're going to have to provide a lot more documentation to say that you've completed a Job Corps—your Job

Corps experience by suggesting—in other words, I understand my colleague's comments about some thank the Lord we completed, and I've been there. But the bottom line is they completed 12th grade, they didn't complete 9th grade, and some pass the program well; some pass it by the skin of their teeth, but they have passed it.

So you're going to have to explain to me how, if you didn't complete the program, you're a completer. And I mean, I'm listening to the same words, and I'm hearing something different than, I guess, my colleague is, and it's extraordinarily misleading, because I can tell you that we've looked at your statistics and thought that, my gosh, you know, 48 percent, which is not an impressive number, but it's satisfactory, actually completed their vocational training, and yet only 14 percent truly completed it. Some didn't go all the way.

Ms. SILVA. I can tell you that from the inception of establishing vocational completion as an outcome measure and making categories between vocational completer and advanced completer, we have had this designation where we were able to develop a——

Mr. SHAYS. I'm not disputing that this was here before you.

Ms. SILVA. Oh, no, that's not what I'm saying. What I'm saying is that this is a system that we have used to develop curriculum where we have an open-entry, open-exit class, where an instructor is dealing with people at different levels within his or her classroom, and the student is progressing as far as that individual student can go.

Mr. SHAYS. And I don't dispute that you're going to have different levels, but——

Ms. SILVA. That can be called completer.

Mr. SHAYS. To me some are partial completers, and some finally complete their entire experience.

Let me understand something. When someone participates in the Job Corps program, what are they told? How long is the program?

Ms. SILVA. The program can be up to 2 years, and if someone goes into an advanced program, they can go for a third year.

Mr. SHAYS. OK.

Ms. SILVA. So the basic Job Corps program is 2 years. They go through orientation in their—we describe the nature of the program, the vocational offerings——

Mr. SHAYS. Let's just walk through this, and I'm going to try to put myself—I'm going to try to have an open mind about this. Tell us the different program levels that you have and the terms you use.

When someone signs up, what do they commit to? Let's start with that: When someone signs up for the program, what is their commitment? They commit for 2 weeks? They commit for 6 months? What do they commit to?

Ms. SILVA. They commit to trying to get the maximum benefit from Job Corps.

Mr. SHAYS. Which is what?

Ms. SILVA. It depends on the individual. If someone comes in with a high school diploma, that would be different than if someone was a high school dropout.

Mr. SHAYS. Let me be clear on this. When someone comes in, don't they have an objective to complete something? What do they commit to?

Ms. SILVA. We ask them to commit to being in the program for up to a year.

Mr. SHAYS. So up to at least a year?

Ms. SILVA. Right.

Mr. SHAYS. So the bottom line is, someone says, I'm going to be in the program, they've committed a year of their life to the program, correct?

Ms. SILVA. That's what they say.

Mr. SHAYS. Well, I hope that's——

Ms. SILVA. It's a voluntary program.

Mr. SHAYS. I realize people can leave, but if my daughter sets out to go to college, I'm not going to send her there to commit to doing it a certain period and find that anything less than that to me is not living up to what they set out to do, which is—you know, it's a 4-year program, I'm going to do my 4 years.

But anyway, it's a 1-year program.

Ms. SILVA. But the philosophy of the Job Corps program is that it's individual-paced, so some students——

Mr. SHAYS. We're not talking about individual pace. Excuse me, I'm not disputing individual pace. I'm going to back up a second. They commit to a year.

Ms. SILVA. If that's what it takes to get that maximum benefit. Some students will leave, be able to leave earlier.

Mr. SHAYS. And complete the whole program in a year?

Ms. SILVA. Yes, complete their vocational offering. If, for example, they enter with a high school diploma, then they would not need to go into the academic portion of the Job Corps, which would mean they can go into vocational training on a full-time basis.

Mr. SHAYS. Let me just say this to you: We're going to have as much time as you need, so I'm going to be very calm, and you can know that we will just sort this out, but we're not going to complete this until we do.

Mr. TOWNS. You know——

Mr. SHAYS. Do you want your time, and I will go—come—I will take my full 10 minutes and come back.

Mr. TOWNS. I would like to have some more time.

Mr. SHAYS. I'm very comfortable. This is what we do. I'm going to give you 10 minutes, you have your 10 minutes. I will take 10 minutes. We will go to him. I will come back and take 10, and you can take 10, and I will come back and take 10 until we get an answer before we move forward.

Mr. TOWNS. Let me say, Mr. Chairman, I understand your question, but I think when you put it into the real world, it's not a lot of difference, because you have people that leave high school going to regular college, and they're going to major in biology, they're going to major in physics, they're going to major in all kinds of things until they get there, and all of a sudden they major in another area. And, of course that didn't mean that they've failed. They didn't complete. I think here——

Mr. SHAYS. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. TOWNS. I would be glad to yield.

Mr. SHAYS. If my daughter sets out to get a degree in college, and she does the first year, and she comes back and says, Dad, I completed it, I'm going to say, Sweetie, you completed 1 year. You've got 3 years to go. You have completed nothing other than one-quarter of the program. You have not completed it. So that's my view.

Mr. TOWNS. Well, the point is that you have to understand that there's a lot of situations even on the college level where you have technical schools, where you go and you spend 2 years and they give you an associate's degree, or you spend 2 years and they give you a certificate, or you spend a year and they give you a certificate.

I think we have to not lose sight of what we're dealing with here. We're dealing with 64 percent of these students never having held a job before. I mean, we're talking about just learning work habits and skills and all of that. I think we should not lose track of that. I think that's a tough situation.

But let me just move to a question. I think that we probably can come back to that. The sole-source contracts arrangements has come under fire. I think that's putting it mildly. Can you tell us how the Job Corps students benefit from this arrangement?

Ms. SILVA. Certainly. We have nine sole-source contracts, and students in Job Corps who participate in this training receive on average 70 cents an hour more when they complete that training than people who are non-sole-source-contracted vocational training. And for those who are in job training matches, they receive 87 cents an hour more. We consider this a significant benefit to the young people as they strive to develop work habits and self-sufficiency for themselves and their families.

There's a significant wage difference in the outcome for the students from national-training-contractor-provided training and local-center-provided training. That's a significant difference. It is concentrated in the construction fields, although not solely, and this enables young people to get solid training, particularly for those young people who may not want to have desk jobs and work inside, for people that want to be able to have a different type of employment history.

And this training provided by national training contractors gives these young people the opportunity because of their national network with local unions and business associations. It enables them to have connections and be able for these young people to relocate to obtain jobs in these very, very important areas.

Mr. TOWNS. Thank you.

Let me go to one other area where there's a lot of controversy about the fact that if a Job Corps member joins the military, that's considered a placement. I don't have a problem with that. But can you tell us the reason why joining the military is counted?

Ms. SILVA. Certainly. We consider that joining the military is a fine career choice for a young person. It has good wages and a very, very strong benefit package. And so we consider a young person's voluntary choice to be in the military a very, very fine employment and career path for many.

Mr. TOWNS. Why do you think the controversy? I don't quite understand it. I agree with you, but why do you think people have a problem with that?

Ms. SILVA. I'm not sure, but what I have heard is that there's a concern about it being a job training match. And what we did in this particular area is assume that—again, job training matches are based on coding, and I'm making judgments about the type of training and the entry into the military. Military jobs relate to so many different types of occupations that rather than sorting through each of them, it would be much easier to actually just have a job training match attached to that. And that's why we do it, and that's done automatically.

Mr. TOWNS. Let me go to Ms. Blanchette. Are you saying that everybody has to make a perfect score? I mean, is that what you're really saying?

Ms. BLANCHETTE. No, sir, it's not. In fact, we have made no comment whatsoever regarding the level of competence of people who have gone through these programs. What we're talking about is what is reported to the public and what is generally understood.

If, for example, you looked in the annual report of the Job Corps program for program year 1996, and that report was issued after June 1997, because the program year runs from July 1, 1996, through June 30th, 1997, there is nothing in that report that would indicate that when a completion rate is provided, that it's not full completion of all the components of the particular training program.

So the Congress and for anyone else outside of Job Corps in the public who would have this information would have no way of determining that what is being reported as completion is really not completion of all components of a program. So that is our issue, the issue we have raised.

Mr. TOWNS. Ms. Silva, has Job Corps ever taken disciplinary actions against a national training contractor? Have any of the national training contractors ever been kicked out of the program, and if so, what was the reason for their dismissal?

Ms. SILVA. We formerly had a sole-source contract with a national maritime union, and based on performance issues, we no longer have that contract. So we used to have 10 sole-source contracts. We now have nine. We eliminated that one based on performance during the last 5 years.

Mr. TOWNS. The other issue is that there're always complaints out there about being able to match the person with the job, and so what are you doing in terms of employer involvement, because, looking in the paper, you see all kinds of jobs, and then you sort of wonder if people are really talking to each other in terms of whether or not Job Corps is actually training people that might be able to take some of these jobs.

I recognize that in some areas it requires more than you might be able to give. I understand that. But the point is that is there any conversation going on between the people that are going to do the hiring and the people that are doing the training?

Ms. SILVA. Actually there's more and more of that conversation. Indeed Job Corps has a variety of customers; certainly students are foremost. But, indeed, employers are the ones that do the hiring,

and we have initiated major efforts with employers to involve them much more fully in the Job Corps program throughout. We have employers helping us revise and develop curriculum for our students training. We have employers who are serving as mentors.

We are trying to involve employers as job coaches. We are customizing training based on employer input and requests. We are having business round tables in several different regions to be able to sit down with employers and talk to them about how better we can serve them in terms of our training program.

One of the things that we have learned from listening to employers is that they're keenly interested in employability skills; that, in addition to having hard occupational skills. Truly it is the softer skills, employability skills, attitude, so to speak, that are important to employers. We're spending a lot of emphasis on those kinds of skill training, as part of the overall Job Corps program. We have revised significantly our social skills training, which has 45 specific skills that we are helping young people obtain in Job Corps that we would call life skills. And these are skills that young people will take with them to workplaces so that they will be able to be part of employer teams, so that they will have better communication skills, focus on attendance, punctuality, appearance.

We're doing major efforts in Job Corps in our vocational training, but also in the rest of the experience since it is a 7-day-a-week, 24-hour-a-day experience. We're focusing a great deal of effort on employability for these young people.

Mr. TOWNS. Thank you very much.

Let me just ask one more question, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.

I'm concerned, and this is to you, Ms. Blanchette, that your testimony today outlines problems in the Job Corps program, but states that the recommended solutions will be addressed in the future.

Can you give us an idea of what those recommendations will be, and also tell us what your time line will be in submitting those solutions to the subcommittee?

Ms. BLANCHETTE. I can't tell you today what our recommendations will be, because the recommendations are based on ongoing work. As you are aware, this subcommittee has requested that we look at the issues that we're discussing here today for the vocational training component of Job Corps, and that is something that we're still doing. In terms of—the report is due to the subcommittee on or before November 24 of this year.

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Pappas has graciously allowed me to recognize Mr. Barrett, who needs to be somewhere, and would like to yield to him.

Mr. BARRETT. Thank you, Mr. Shays and Mr. Pappas.

Let me make a comment I made before. I sit here and I have a lot of difficulty with Job Corps, a program that I should be supporting, but it will never cease to amaze me that the community that I represent, which has 200,000 minorities, has many young African American men out of work, has been ignored by Job Corps forever. And it makes me have very little confidence in this program, because I think the decisions have been politically motivated as to where the Job Corps centers are located.

I think that's unfortunate, because there are people in my community who could use a program that would help young people. But the decisions as to deciding for Job Corps I do not think have been made on the merits.

Thank you. And I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SHAYS. I thank my colleague.

Mr. Pappas.

Mr. PAPPAS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this hearing. In my district there have been a number of manufacturing plants that are closing, probably a handful just within the last year, year and a half since I took office. And my response to that has been to convene people from the community, both from various programs that include some Federal involvement and also State-run work force investment boards in New Jersey, and meet with both the labor leaders and employees and the business managers as well to try to help these folks in moving on from here since decisions have been made to close facilities.

Mr. Chairman, in your opening statement, and I'm just going to quote a portion of it, Job Corps vocational training should be placements in careers, not just temporary jobs. It's been my experience in just having probably three or four different forums and gatherings with these people to try to help them and try to see what can be done to not just help them on a long-term basis, but on a short-term basis. Even prior to my serving in Congress and county government, where I dealt with these programs, it used to be called other things, but work force investment boards. I think we do a pretty good job in maybe longer-term solutions for people, but the short-term solutions is where I think we're still missing the mark.

This is not just a criticism of Job Corps. I'm not sure exactly how to deal with that. We're struggling with that in central New Jersey.

But hearing what I heard today troubles me about what is a completion or what is not a completion. I understand that just as in higher education, courses of study are tailored to a person's interests and their ability. This vagueness in responses that I'm hearing certainly concerns me and certainly would concern, I think, an average taxpayer.

I, too, want to be supportive of programs like this, because I do think they make a real difference for people. I do think, though, and I would like your comments, and I know, Mr. Chairman, this is not the subject of the hearing, but I would like your comments both now and in the future about my remarks of how we may do a better job on a long-term basis than a short-term basis and what consideration there is with regard to this program and others that you may be aware of.

Ms. SILVA. Speaking specifically about Job Corps, one of the issues that we're trying to do is meet with employers to try to deal with immediate needs. One of the things that we have done with two employers, one in Louisiana and the other in Texas, we have dealt with them by customizing training so that they could work with us and work with our existing vocational training offerings, taking those as the basic and then customizing for their needs so that we could more readily develop an entry-level training pool for them. So we've done that.

In another area that we are developing a pilot is in the information technology area, where we're trying to respond to needs that everyone reads in the paper every day that there are employers desperately trying to find workers in this area. We're working with the Air Force research lab and with several private companies to try to enhance a training curriculum, so that again we could put something in place within a year so that we would start building an entry-level training pool for these employers.

Within the Department of Labor, we have other employment training programs that deal with short-term needs and that deal with areas that are particularly affected by plant closures, and perhaps some from the Department who would be far more knowledgeable than I could brief you on those areas. I would not feel comfortable, but we could arrange that.

Mr. PAPPAS. I would appreciate that. If you could have someone do that, I would appreciate it very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you.

Ms. Silva, I had a little time to think of how I want to describe this, and then I would like to go from there and have our dialog, and then I will be coming to you as well, Ms. Blanchette.

Using the analogy of an associate degree, bachelor of arts, graduate student and getting a master certificate, either be it a 4-year master's or after, and a Ph.D., I think it's wrong to say that someone completed an associate degree if they didn't complete it, but I think it's wonderful when someone has completed an associate degree. I think it's wrong to suggest that someone completed a bachelor of arts until they completed their bachelor of arts. And I just keep going down the list.

It seems to me you have a completer and an advanced completer, and basically a completer is someone who hasn't completed everything, but has completed something in your program, and Lord knows what that "something" is. It almost seems to me in a sense like you have merit badges, and I don't mean this in a belittling way. I realize that one of the things you want is to have people feel they've completed something. You want that for their self-esteem, and you want them to move on to the next level.

I'm willing to cut a lot of slack in how we do certain things, but it is extraordinarily unhelpful to evaluate a program in which you have two steps; one, a completer, and, two, an advanced completer. It gives the program too much ability, in my judgment, to distort outcomes. I mean, that to me is a no-brainer, because you can just always say, well, they completed something, but we have no way of knowing what part they completed.

Now, first, am I right to make an assumption here that you basically call someone a completer someone who hasn't been a full completer, but has completed something? Is that true?

Ms. SILVA. Completed a specific number of skill sets, yes, that are designated on the training achievement record. They're printed there, and these skill sets have been determined as completer levels.

Mr. SHAYS. How many different completer levels do you have?

Ms. SILVA. Several hundred.

Mr. SHAYS. You have several hundred completer levels?

Ms. SILVA. Yes.

Mr. SHAYS. So someone could be in the program 2 weeks and have completed something?

Ms. SILVA. I don't think so.

Mr. SHAYS. How long would they have to be in the program to complete something?

Ms. SILVA. I would say probably at least 90 days.

Mr. SHAYS. OK. And remember, you need to be accurate here. If I find out later that you can be in a program and be in there for 30 days and complete something, your credibility will take a nose dive. So I'm going to assume that you can't complete anything until 90 days.

Ms. SILVA. I would find it very, very unlikely that you would do that. I cannot——

Mr. SHAYS. What likely would you complete? What would you likely complete in 90 days?

Ms. SILVA. A basic level—depending on the skill sets that you have when you come into the program, depending on your level of education. Your previous experience would impact significantly.

Mr. SHAYS. OK. Let me just look under vocation. I will look under welding. Under welding you have a number of tasks required to fully complete training, 128. So that would be an advanced completer?

Ms. SILVA. Yes.

Mr. SHAYS. Is that right? If you fully completed welding, you had to do all 128? A minimum number of tasks required to be considered a completer, 36. Percent of total task required to be considered a completer, 28. So if I am learning welding, there are 128 tasks, correct?

Ms. SILVA. Employers have designated, along with Job Corps instructors, 128 tasks to be what we would consider an advanced completer.

Mr. SHAYS. OK. Now, if I do 36 tasks, I'm considered a completer?

Ms. SILVA. Yes, sir. I do not have that document in front of me, but, yes.

Mr. SHAYS. It's GAO's document, page 8.

Ms. SILVA. OK.

Mr. SHAYS. So it starts at the—it's table 1, Number of Tasks Participants?

Ms. SILVA. OK.

Mr. SHAYS. OK. So what happens if I complete 75? Am I still a completer, or am I a completer plus?

Ms. SILVA. You are a completer. You would be—again, if I had the TAR in front of me, I would be able to say you would be a completer of a particular type of welding. You are a vocational completer, yes, in terms of the gross categorization of being a trainee, a completer or an advanced completer. Yes, you are still a completer.

Mr. SHAYS. Wait a second, you gave me three choices.

Ms. SILVA. A trainee is someone that does not complete.

Mr. SHAYS. Then you've got a completer?

Ms. SILVA. Right, and then an advanced completer.

Mr. SHAYS. And a completer is someone who basically does, in this case, less than 30 percent of the total?

Ms. SILVA. Yes.

Mr. SHAYS. So you're a completer when you've done 30 percent. And what does the 28 percent represent?

Ms. SILVA. According to GAO's chart, this is—the way I read it, it would be that it is 28 percent of the total tasks, which would be, I believe, 128. That 36 represents 28 percent of 128.

Mr. SHAYS. OK. So in this case under health occupations, the number that you have to do is 179. You have to do 95 percent in order to be a completer. And in the case of welding, you only need to do 28 percent. What's the sense here? I'm trying to understand the logic.

Ms. SILVA. The sense would be the number of tasks that this group of employers and Job Corps instructors have designated as essential for minimum requirements for a young person to be able to go out and get an entry-level job in this field.

Mr. SHAYS. So in every instance this is viewed as what you need to do to get an entry-level job?

Ms. SILVA. Yes. There are a series of different levels. You can—as I mentioned before, you can be a receptionist, or you can be a word processor under clerical. To be a secretary, you would be an advanced completer. That is a different level of occupation and of training.

Mr. SHAYS. When you are in the Job Corps program, if I go in and set out to become a welder, I'm learning other skills besides welding, correct?

Ms. SILVA. You are learning academic skills and social skills?

Mr. SHAYS. Right.

Ms. SILVA. Yes.

Mr. SHAYS. How do you evaluate whether they have completed the nonwelding part? I'm one of the Job Corps' participants. I sign on as a welder. I have done 36 of the minimum number of requirements, so I am a completer of welding.

Ms. SILVA. Yes, sir.

Mr. SHAYS. What a bad name. I have not completed welding. I have finished some part of a basic minimum skill. But that notwithstanding, what are the other things that I have to know? What are the other things in the programs to be—am I a graduate when I have 36 skills?

Ms. SILVA. You are a vocational completer. And under the new legislation, the new work force legislation, that is considered a graduate. A vocational completer or someone attaining a GED, under the new legislation that would be considered a graduate.

Mr. SHAYS. So let us just say—do I have to do well in the other things in order to be a completer? Or if I do well in the welding, I am a completer. Let's just say I don't have my GED.

Ms. SILVA. Under the new legislation it is either vocational completer or GED or high school diploma. It is either, not and.

Mr. SHAYS. So if I get a GED, I'm a completer.

Ms. SILVA. Yes, sir.

Mr. SHAYS. But there, that makes sense to me. I have completed my GED. I have gotten my high school degree. I didn't just go to 11th grade and have you call me a completer.

Ms. SILVA. Right.

Mr. SHAYS. So you are saying to me if I don't get my GED, and I fail everything else, but I do my welding, I'm a completer.

Ms. SILVA. You are a vocational completer, yes, sir.

Mr. SHAYS. Tell me why that is helpful terminology? Why is that helpful? What does it tell the student, and what does it tell me?

Ms. SILVA. What it tells the student is, clearly, on the training achievement record that that young person has, and has seen his or her instructor check off each of the tasks, that that young person has learned those things, has learned those particular tasks and has completed all of those tasks.

The student also sees that there may be several other pages of tasks that he or she has not completed, but they have completed those tasks.

Mr. SHAYS. Now, I have 92 other tasks to go. How do you give me some level of accomplishment that I have done something more than being a completer, in your terminology, but not an advanced completer? What gradations do you have in between?

Ms. SILVA. As far as the particular student, the student is a completer throughout that gradation.

Mr. SHAYS. So from then on, I'm a completer. So I don't get any other feeling of reaching a certain skill level until I have done the other 92?

Ms. SILVA. Well, you would continue to see your training achievement record that is kept and updated. You would continue to see your employer check off each particular skill. These are on the training achievement records that every student looks at and knows how many they want to complete and how many they need to complete.

So the instructor initials this and dates it, and so there is a track record of the student gaining. And the student can see which are the particular skills and can discuss with the vocational instructor the advantages of continuing; what different types of occupations the trainee may be able to get based on proceeding.

In Job Corps vocational training is a very important component, but we're focusing on students understanding the need to get as much as they can while they're in the program. So the training achievement record, by having these different levels, enables a student to see that they can continue to go, and that is a very positive and, I think, powerful incentive.

Mr. SHAYS. I think it is foolish.

Mr. SILVA. OK.

Mr. SHAYS. I think it is foolish to not do something more than that. To me, it is like saying you completed your high school degree, and the next level of achievement is a Ph.D. We're not going to give you an associate's degree, we're not going to give you a graduate degree, we're not going to give you a bachelor's, we're not going to give you a master's, we're not going to give you anything in between, but by the way, you can take note of the fact that you have finished 3 years of courses, so you are a little closer.

So a student who has done 28 and adds 10 more says, basically, I've got 82 left, with no other title, no other recognition.

Miss Blanchette, when you looked at this, what was your reaction to the way Job Corps does this and now is arguing in support of, which is a surprise to me, I will say, Ms. Silva.

Ms. BLANCHETTE. We were surprised, too, to truly understand what a completer—how the completer was defined for Job Corps. We have people on our staff who have worked with these programs a lot longer than I have, and it was in a conversation that it came to light, almost by accident, that this is what was meant by a completer. We had no idea. And then once we found that out, we looked into it further and got more information.

Mr. SHAYS. So what did you think a completer was before you looked at the program?

Ms. BLANCHETTE. We thought it was someone who completed all the duties and tasks assigned to a particular vocational training curriculum. So in the case of welding, it would be someone who had completed all 128 tasks.

In terms of what Ms. Silva is talking about, there is a difference between what you do internally in a program, to manage the program internally, to provide motivation and encouragement to your participants, and what you report to the public, and what you use to assess the success of your program. And I think more than anything, that is the issue here.

We are not taking issue with the training achievement record or how these step-off levels are determined. But in terms of what is reported to the public as being completion and what Job Corps uses to assess its own success, we think that, as a minimum, maybe you would want to report all the information. You would want to report a rate of people who have made the first step-off level or maybe the second or a third of the step-off levels for a particular curriculum. But you want to make it clear what it is you are reporting and what you are using in assessing the program.

Mr. SHAYS. See, I would be struck by the fact that you would have step one, step two, step three, maybe step four, maybe step five, whatever, and then you would have a full completer; and a full completer, as opposed to someone who just completed step one and step two.

I can tell you this much, Ms. Silva. I don't think there is a Member in Congress who would have believed anything other than what Ms. Blanchette believed. And so it makes me want to go back and look at all of the documents that we have to now understand your terminology, your logic for what is success.

It would strike me that the program, as needed as it is, has got a long way to go before it is successful. And it strikes me that one of the reasons this was devised was to disguise the lack of the success of the program, and that is not something I'm very happy to say.

Would you describe to me how you allocate and determine the success of the program in matching to a job skill?

Ms. SILVA. The second chart?

Mr. SHAYS. Why don't you walk me through it and tell me if you agree with that chart or not and why. Let us just take your most successful program, as I see it. Center "A". Do you dispute the findings of GAO in that area?

Ms. SILVA. I don't know, in terms of the actual data. In terms of the presentation here, I'm aware, and we spoke at the earlier hearing about the difficulty of using the crosswalk, the existing crosswalk for job training matches. And at the earlier hearing I spoke about the fact that the Department was going to be using this new crosswalk system, which we hope will be far more manageable and that we will be able to monitor far more successfully than we have a system based on 12 or 14,000 DOT codes.

As I have said, looking at this, if these were truly questionable, this would concern me significantly. Along with the introduction of the O*NET system, I am also introducing additional monitoring, including what I think the GAO did, which is quite helpful, is the telephone monitoring, because we have relied on looking at numbers and looking at statistics. I think getting telephone calls on a random basis is very important, and we are committed to doing that as we introduce O*NET, which is our new tracking system. I would not be comfortable with this at all.

I will get the information from GAO, in terms of the specifics, but looking at this I would not be comfortable with this at all.

Mr. SHAYS. Fair enough. First off, I will say to you for the record, I will say for the record, I happen to believe that any job, even a temporary job, is an important process of education for a person. I may have said this at the last hearing, if I had ever said to my dad, I don't want to work at McDonald's because it is a dead-end job, my dad would have asked me how many hours I was working, and if I had said 10, he would have said, son, it just increased to 15. Because he would have known it would have taught me to get there on time; it would have taught me that one of your responsibilities is to be of service to people. And you are of service; the smile, the courtesy. All those things are job training skills.

So I do not in any way belittle a temporary job—in fact, I would love Job Corps to be able to determine who got a job and then evaluate the level of that job to the training they received—just as I don't want to in any way belittle levels of completion for participants in Job Corps because there are levels of completion. I just don't want there to be an assumption by the terminology that someone has completed something that they have not completed. They completed a part of something.

Is it fair for me to make an assumption that if there are, say, five levels to welding, that if five represents the best, all 128, and there are levels of participation in the work force in welding, that the most advanced welder shouldn't be allowed to take credit for a job-related experience if it's not up to the level of their training?

It is a hard way for me to ask the question, but do you get a sense of what I'm trying to ask?

Ms. SILVA. I think.

Mr. SHAYS. I am just wondering if the pool is too large.

Let me just see if I can do it a different way. Does the Job Corps limit the training-related job matches available for each step-off level in a vocational course?

Ms. SILVA. No, if I'm understanding the question.

Mr. SHAYS. So it seems to me that you could have levels of training——

Ms. SILVA. Right.

Mr. SHAYS [continuing]. And you could have levels within a job, and that levels of training, even the best trained would be allowed to take credit for a training-related match even if they were at the bottom of that actual job level.

I can only give by way of analogy someone who gets ultimately a Ph.D. I am sorry to keep coming back to this level. But they get a Ph.D. in history, and let's say they started out just learning to be a teacher, and they could teach at a certain course level. But they got the highest training in teaching history, and they found themselves in a job in teaching elementary school in history; not an unimportant job, but they are teaching. So should that person be allowed to say that they got that job match?

I would say no; that they should be in a level in high school or college teaching, and I wouldn't give that a job match. I make an assumption under the way you all do it that that person would be a job match.

Ms. SILVA. Yes, they would. Yes, they would, and in that particular example, I think that while we personally may differ as to the categorization, I would think that that would be appropriate because the person had gone on to schooling to be a teacher and had obtained a high level.

Mr. SHAYS. I would say to you that that is very unhelpful. Your answer is truthful, I am not saying that, that is what you believe, and you should say what you believe. But I would say that would totally distort the success of your job training. They could have gotten that same match as a bachelor of arts. They didn't need to get their master's and their Ph.D. to do it. All of that was extra. And if you allow that to happen, you make those matches almost meaningless, in my judgment.

We're not going to resolve it today, but that is just another area of difference.

We are going to have a vote in 10 minutes. We are going to have a second panel, but, Ms. Blanchette, you have two others who have accompanied you. Could you talk about the sole-source justification issue?

Ms. BLANCHETTE. Certainly, and I will perhaps let Mr. Bedrick, from the Office of General Counsel, say more.

Basically, I want to make the point that there is a difference between having a contractor who is doing a good job and having one that gets to be a contractor because of the sole-source procurement process. And what we were addressing was the justification the Job Corps used to use sole-source procurement.

The preferred means of procurement for the Federal Government is open and full competition, and if an exception to that is made, the standards for allowing that are very high. And our point was the Job Corps had not met those standards.

Barry, is there anything you would like to add to that?

Mr. BEDRICK. I agree with what Ms. Blanchette said, and I think the distinction that she makes is very important.

What we are talking about here is the responsibility that the law and regulations place on the Department of Labor to adequately justify why no other services can satisfy their need and why the services are available only from these particular sources. We are not, as she said, questioning the performance of the sources. The

issue is whether the decision not to have competition was adequately justified.

Mr. SHAYS. And, Ms. Silva, what would be the response of the Job Corps on the whole issue of single source?

Ms. SILVA. The response of Job Corps is that we have sought sole-source authority for these particular contractors because of their experience with the young people, the experience with Job Corps, their national network of associations.

They can provide not only training, but also national placement, so that they can have associations throughout the country from which our young people come, and that those would be the primary reasons for which they are uniquely qualified to be able to carry out this training and placement responsibility.

Mr. SHAYS. I'm going to be voting. I would be happy to have both of you make concluding comments. We have a second panel, and we will get into this issue. This is really an introduction to us of what I consider to be a very serious problem of, one, terminology; and, two, evaluation. So we will be having dialog with our staffs and trying to work together to resolve what I think is a big problem.

Ms. Silva, I am happy to have you make a closing comment; Ms. Blanchette as well.

Ms. SILVA. My closing remarks really would be that the intent of the Job Corps Program and the data we collect is to present an honest portrayal of the success of the Job Corps Program. We present this information, and while we may disagree today about definitions, I would look forward to working with the committee about definitions.

The intent of Job Corps is to provide maximum services to young people and to report to Congress and to anyone the value and the results of our program. No effort at all, no intent at all to mislead anyone. And I would look forward, again, to working with your committee to be able to resolve these definitional differences, because the program is very good, we are successful, and I would like to be able to come up with a methodology where we could present this and come to resolution about it.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you.

Ms. Blanchette.

Ms. BLANCHETTE. Just briefly I would say we recognize that Job Corps has made a contribution to society and to helping young people who desperately need help because of their disadvantaged status. But at the same time, in order to provide the maximum and the best help to this group of individuals, you have to, as a program manager, have information that adequately measures the success of your program. And as an external player, such as the Congress or the GAO or the IG, you also need this information.

So to the extent that Job Corps can be more explicit in explaining what it is it is reporting and reporting enough information that is meaningful in terms of actual success, that would be helpful.

Mr. SHAYS. OK. I am going to say to you that I am stuck with the bias that I do have; that there should be levels of successes; that in each case there should be completion; and that I think that we are not going to just get into terminology, but we are going to get into looking at whether Job Corps and reporting—whether Job

Corps should have a different way of providing completions to encourage people to go from one step to the next.

I have a problem with this one step of completion and then the next step of advanced completion. I think there should be gradations. I think there should be completions at different areas that are noted and reported. And I do think that, Ms. Silva, to your credit, you do acknowledge that in terms of the job match, that that needs to be looked at a little better, and that there may be some points made by GAO that need to be evaluated and looked at.

So with that, I will put us in recess. I am going to run right out of here, and we will get to our next panel when we get back, and thank you all for being here.

[Recess.]

Mr. SHAYS. We need to get our witnesses standing, and then we will swear you in.

Our witnesses, Mr. Frederick Humphreys, senior vice president for training, Home Builders Institute; Mr. Gilbert Wolf, national administrator, Plasterers and Cement Masons Job Corps Training Program; Mr. Curtis Price, center director, the Potomac Job Corps Center, Washington, DC; Mr. Aaron Payne, vocational training instructor, Old Dominion Job Corps Center, Monroe, VA.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Mr. SHAYS. Let me just note for the record that everyone responded in the affirmative, and I will say to you all that this is an investigative committee, so we swear in all our witnesses, even Members of Congress, when they come. So we do it every time.

We are going to go in the order I called you: Mr. Humphreys, Mr. Wolf, Mr. Price and then Mr. Payne. You will have 5 minutes. We will roll it over, and so if you get stopped with the 5 minutes, you have between 5 and 10. You will have a little flexibility, but we would prefer you to be closer to 5 than 10. I really want you to state what you have to state and have it on the record, and since we only have one Member, we don't have as many questions, so your statements can be a little longer. Thank you.

Mr. Humphreys.

STATEMENTS OF FREDERICK N. HUMPHREYS, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR TRAINING, HOME BUILDERS INSTITUTE; GILBERT A. WOLF, NATIONAL ADMINISTRATOR, PLASTERERS AND CEMENT MASONS JOB CORPS TRAINING PROGRAM; CURTIS PRICE, CENTER DIRECTOR, THE POTOMAC JOB CORPS CENTER, WASHINGTON, DC; AND AARON PAYNE, VOCATIONAL TRAINING INSTRUCTOR, OLD DOMINION JOB CORPS CENTER, MONROE, VA

Mr. HUMPHREYS. Congressman Shays and distinguished members of the committee, I am Fred Humphreys, senior vice president for training for Home Builders Institute.

The Home Builders Institute, or HBI, is the education and training arm of the National Association of Home Builders. Representing more than 195,000 member companies, the NAHB is the largest trade association in the world representing the residential and light commercial construction industry. The association is a unique federation of over 800 State and local home builder associa-

tions. The association has a local home builder association in every town in this country, probably, with a population of 25,000 or more people.

The association's decision to become involved in training young people in the construction trades in Job Corps was a major initiative on the part of the association in addressing the chronic problem of the shortage of entry-level skilled workers. NAHB started its first Job Corps training program in 1973. Since that time, the relationship with the Job Corps has grown, until presently we have 164 construction training programs in 63 Job Corps centers.

Utilizing NAHB's national placement network, we participate in major construction trade shows. Exhibit space provided by NAHB to it at no cost. This results in 3,000 job leads annually. Many of them are for multiple positions. These employment leads are disseminated to all NAHB and HBI instructors and are extremely helpful to students who need to relocate because they may not reside in employment-rich areas.

Our association members include developers, light commercial and residential builders, remodelers and suppliers. Affiliation with these members allows us to custom fit a particular student's skills to match the needs of the employer, thus improving the chances of success.

The NAHB, as well as other national training contractors, has initiated a postplacement followup effort in cooperation with the Department of Labor. All students who terminate from our programs are contacted and are given additional placement support if needed. This may include job upgrading as well as support in securing housing and transportation. Placement followup is ongoing, and the results are documented quarterly.

HBI–NAHB has raised more than a quarter of a million dollars in non-Federal funds to assist Job Corps graduates who need financial assistance for transportation and housing until they receive their first paychecks.

Because we represent the construction industry itself, we are able to incorporate the skills, techniques and attitudes into our training that the industry most requires. The curriculum and training materials that we use are industry-validated and are reviewed regularly by employers. At all 63 Job Corps training sites, we work to establish a close relationship between our craft instructors and local builders, remodelers and subcontractors.

In order to assist and encourage students to complete their GED and their construction craft training, our instructors work closely with the academic instructors, particularly in math, science and English, to better integrate and reinforce the knowledge and skills students learn in their academic classes. Planning meetings are held between our vocational teachers and the academic teachers so no opportunity is missed to stress the relevance of the academic subjects used in the construction trades. Construction employers increasingly are looking for strong verbal as well as math skills in new employees. This collaboration is addressing the demand from the employer community.

Working with our member employer community, we have established rigorous professional standards for our instructors. All instructors must have at least 7 years of experience working in the

industry in their particular craft. Applicants, in particular, are sought who have experienced teaching in apprenticeship schools. After hiring, they are required to attend OSHA-recognized safety training programs, and then they are further sent to an existing Job Corps center to work with a senior instructor to hone their skills. We also pay the costs for college course work needed to achieve State teacher certification.

Because of the industry experience of national training contractor instructors, we manage and perform millions of dollars annually of vocational skill training projects, both on center and in communities: Examples of construction of houses for Habitat for Humanity, senior citizen and child care facilities, construction of gymnasiums and rehabilitation of dormitories.

In addition to providing real industry working conditions for students, we have saved local communities and the government millions of dollars in construction costs each year. Local service providers lack the expertise to accomplish projects of this nature. For example, at the Albuquerque, NM, Job Corps center, the HBI building and apartment maintenance, carpentry, electrical and plumbing programs are currently rehabilitating all of the bathrooms in the existing dormitories on center. The project will cost Job Corps and the government approximately $350,000. The appraised value of the work, when it is completed, is $920,000.

HBI, looking to the future, is exploring new techniques and new strategies to improve its training programs. Within the past year we have doubled the amount of OSHA safety training required of all instructors. We are currently preparing instructor materials to help them teach students to better manage difficult behavior, and we will continue to work with the Job Corps national and regional staff to refine our training.

Since job placement and wage data is an important basis for measuring success in Job Corps, we ask that the Congress consider adding resources for postprogram followup. This would provide for the retrieval of wage data and continuing education information on students.

Mr. Chairman, the Department of Labor contracts with national training contractors because we are the industry. Because its employers and workers are our members, we have the advantage of assuring that our training reflects the best practices of construction. Our members assist us in making sure our training materials and practices are current and relevant and meet the demands of employers.

This unique partnership with Job Corps provides our student with a rare advantage as they begin their careers in one of the country's most important and large industries.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about the benefits of Job Corps to the residential and light construction industry.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you, Mr. Humphreys. We will come back with questions after we have heard from all four witnesses.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Humphreys follows:]

Job Corps Testimony

Congressman Shays and distinguished members of the committee, I am Frederick Humphreys, Senior Vice President for Training for the Home Builders Institute.

The Home Builders Institute (HBI) is the education and training arm of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB). Representing more than 195,000 member companies, the NAHB is the largest trade association in the world representing the residential and light commercial construction industry. NAHB is a federation of over 800 state and local builder associations. The association is unique in that its chapter affiliates are found in almost every community with a population of 25,000 or more people.

The Department of Labor, in general, and the Job Corps, in particular, have worked in partnership with NAHB/HBI for twenty-five years to address critical industry skilled labor shortages, while simultaneously offering productive career opportunities to some of our country's most economically disadvantaged youth. This partnership has resulted in thousands of America's youth learning needed job and social skills that result in rewarding careers in one of our nation's largest industries.

The member companies of NAHB and the construction industry in general are faced with an aging workforce that is not attracting enough young workers even as the industry grows at a rapid pace. To improve the industries image among young career decision makers, builders are working with guidance counselors and career day sponsors to inform young people about the advantages of a career in the construction industry. The industry is competing with colleges and technology- based industries for the attention of people making career choices. However, the construction industry offers good wages, the sense of satisfaction that comes from helping to create communities and improve the standard of living for many Americans.

On every member survey of critical issues conducted by NAHB in recent years, labor shortages consistently ranks in the top three. An unemployment rate of approximately 3% combined with an insufficient influx of new workers to replace those retiring or leaving the industry continues to exacerbate the problem. Each year approximately 5,000 carpenters enter the industry from apprenticeship programs, yet 18,000 are needed just to keep the workforce at current levels.

Our builders are working hard to help young people making career decisions understand that the construction industry offers the best opportunity for many of them to earn a good and growing wage for themselves and their families. For those with an entrepreneurial spirit, there are few industries that offer the opportunity of starting their own company with a limited initial capital investment. In addition, there is the pride of being a part of building communities. Home ownership is still viewed as a major goal for most people. For the majority of Americans, 53% of their net worth is in their home. Young people who choose the construction industry as a career will be able to take pride in helping to make home ownership a reality for themselves and for their fellow citizens.

NAHB has worked with its state and local associations for many years to address the skilled worker shortage plaguing the industry. The association has assisted local associations to establish productive relationships with vocational schools, both secondary and post secondary. Materials for use at career days in local schools have been created, distributed and assistance has been given in establishing apprenticeship programs.

The association's decision to become involved in training young people in the construction trades in Job Corps was another major initiative in addressing the problem of the shortage of entry level skilled workers. NAHB/HBI started its first Job Corps training program in 1973. Since that time, its relationship with Job Corps has grown to the point that today Job Corps has become one of the largest and most important sources of skilled, entry-level workers for the industry.

Utilizing NAHB/HBI's national placement network, we participate in three major NAHB building shows annually — the International Builder's Show, the Remodeler's Show, and the Multi-family Housing Show. The exhibit space provided at no cost by NAHB enables us to develop more than 3,000 job leads every year, many of which are for multiple positions. These employment leads are disseminated to all NAHB/HBI instructors and are especially helpful to those students who need to relocate because they do not reside in employment rich areas.

Association members include developers, light commercial and residential builders, remodelers and suppliers. Affiliation with these members enables HBI to "custom fit" a particular student's skills to match the needs of the employer, thus improving the chances for success. A directory of all NAHB members has been downloaded in alphabetical order by state/city and category — framing, electrical, plumbing, suppliers, etc. This assists in matching a student's skills with a member's specialty.

NAHB members serve on Job Corps center advisory panels, attend career days and work with center staff in developing school-to-work sites. HBI's building and apartment maintenance program in Springdale, Oregon was one of the model Job Corps school-to-work pilot programs.

NAHB members are serving as mentors for placed students. For example, Chuck Haskins, owner of Haskins Electric — the largest residential electrical contractor in Arizona, has found Job Corps graduates to be excellent employees. To promote employee retention, Mr. Haskins has developed a mentoring program in which he schedules regular sit-down sessions with his Job Corps employees to discuss their job performance and any work transition problems they may have. Mr. Haskins currently employs nine Job Corps graduates.

NAHB/HBI, as well as the other National Training Contractors, has initiated a post-placement follow-up effort in cooperation with the Department of Labor. All students who terminate are contacted and given additional placement support if needed. This

may include upgrading job positions as well as support in securing housing and transportation. This placement follow-up is on-going and the results are documented quarterly.

HBI has raised more than $250,000 in non-federal funds to help Job Corps graduates who need financial assistance for transportation and housing until they receive their first paycheck. Private sector organizations such as State Farm Insurance Companies and local home builder associations regularly contribute monies to help HBI Job Corps graduates with the cost of transitioning between Job Corps and employment. Further, individual NAHB members are making a difference by assisting students overcome one of the greatest barriers to job placement — having adequate transportation — by donating vehicles.

National NAHB publications such as Nation's Building News, Builder magazine and Executive Officers Perspective herald the hiring of Job Corps graduates to meet the critical labor availability issue facing builders. HBI has recently written an NAHB booklet, "Building Tomorrow's Workforce Today" which familiarizes builders with a variety of efforts to deal with this labor supply issue, highlighting accessing Job Corps students as a ready supply of workers trained in the most up-to-date construction techniques. Additionally, HBI has produced a video and guide promoting women in the trades, "Opening New Doors to the American Dream." It features HBI Atlanta Job Corps graduate, Tammy Mills.

Because NAHB represents the industry itself, it is able to incorporate the skills, techniques and attitudes into its training that the industry most needs. The curriculum and training materials used in HBI training programs are industry-validated and reviewed regularly by employers. At all its sixty-three Job Corps training sites, NAHB/HBI works to establish close relationships between our craft instructors and local builders, remodelers and subcontractors. Training can be tailored to meet local labor market needs.

In order to assist and encourage students to complete their GED and their construction training, NAHB/HBI instructors are working closely with academic teachers, particularly in math, science and English, to better integrate and reinforce the knowledge and skills students learn in their academic and vocational classes. Planning meetings are held between academic and vocational teachers so no opportunity is missed to stress the relevance of the academic subjects in a construction trade. Construction employers are increasingly looking for strong verbal as well as math skills in new employees. The collaboration between academic and vocational instructors is addressing this demand from the employer community.

Working with our member employer community, NAHB/HBI has established rigorous professional standards for our instructors. All instructors must have at least seven years of experience working in their particular construction craft. Applicants, in particular, are sought who have experience teaching in apprenticeship programs or in vocational school construction programs. After hiring they are required to attend certain OSHA recognized safety training programs. New instructors are then sent to spend training

time with experienced instructors at existing programs to learn classroom management and adult learning practices and techniques. On going training in new industry practices, products and techniques are provided annually. We pay the cost for college course work needed to achieve state teacher certification.

Working with the US DOL Job Corps government staff, Job Corps center operators and community-based organizations, NAHB/HBI is constantly seeking ways to accelerate and improve its training techniques. On Job Corps centers, vocational skills training projects (VST) are designed to replicate actual construction site working conditions. Students and their instructors annually perform millions of dollars worth of rehabilitation work on Job Corps buildings. In addition, construction work on community projects and Habitat for Humanity houses performed by Job Corps students saves local communities money while strengthening the ties between the Job Corps center, staff and students and local citizens.

NAHB/HBI students continue their tradition of community projects and service at all centers where we train Among recent community projects by students was disaster relief assistance in Roswell, New Mexico. When twin tornados touched down in Chaves County, New Mexico five families lost their homes and many others suffered damages. NAHB/HBI's building and apartment maintenance instructor assembled a construction crew of dedicated volunteers from the Roswell Job Corps Center to clear the debris and repair the damage. The students' good work was featured on local television and radio stations.

When more than 4,000 were displaced by floods in Minot, North Dakota the Quentin Burdick Job Corps Center joined civic leaders and the American Red Cross to help neighbors. Staff and students including NAHB/HBI's building and apartment maintenance class traveled daily from the center to load food onto trucks at the shopping mall, unload trucks at the Salvation Army headquarters, deliver supplies to the town civic center and prepare food at the soup kitchen. In total more than 2,000 hours of assistance were provided.

At the Albuquerque Job Corps Center, the HBI building and apartment maintenance, carpentry, electrical and plumbing programs are rehabing all dorm bathrooms on center. They will be adding square footage and fixtures to eight of the eleven bathrooms. All eleven will be gutted with new walls, ceilings, floors and fixtures installed. This project will be accomplished for an approximate cost of $350,000 at an estimated appraised value of $920,000 once completed. In addition to saving the government a substantial amount of money and improving the quality of life for students on center this project will provide excellent and diversified hands-on training opportunities for a variety of trades.

The construction programs at the Roswell Job Center recently completed a total rehab of the city Boys' and Girls' Community Center on Garden Street. They ran extensive underground gas lines to replace those that were leaking, refinished the community

center gym, added security lighting to the interior and exterior of all community center buildings just in time for the opening summer break. The total appraised value of the community service work is $40,000.

To complement and reinforce the training students receive working on VST projects, NAHB/HBI has begun building training stations in all of its Job Corps vocational shops. This innovative concept allows students to practice, at their own pace, all of the skills they must master before they complete their Job Corps construction craft training. Because these training stations are inside the shop, students daily training needs are not effected by weather or the particular phase of a construction project. Students learn more quickly by repetitively practicing certain tasks while they hone their skills. In addition, we believe this type of training will motivate students to remain in training longer so that their skills and trade knowledge are greater. This will make them more valuable employees when they enter the industry and will facilitate future wage growth.

NAHB/HBI is constantly exploring new techniques and strategies to improve its training programs. Within the past year we have doubled the amount of OSHA safety training required of all instructors. We have prepared and distributed detailed guidelines and materials for safety training in all of our construction programs. We are currently preparing instructor training materials designed to assist instructors in teaching students to better manage difficult behavior. We will continue to work with the Job Corps national and regional staff to improve and refine our training.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about the benefits to Job Corps students and the residential construction industry that result from the Job Corps construction training programs.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Wolf.

Mr. WOLF. Good morning, Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the committee. My name is Gilbert Wolf, and I'm the director of the plasterers joint apprenticeship trust fund and the administrator of the plasterers and cement masons Job Corps training program.

The plasterers and cement masons Job Corps training programming has been in operation for over 30 years. In 1965, a GAO report cited Job Corps for training in dead-end jobs. As a result, in 1967, we were asked by the Department of the Interior to operate Job Corps training programs in three centers: Occonaluftee in North Carolina, Great Onyx in Kentucky, and Harper's Ferry in West Virginia. We now operate 60 training programs at 39 Job Corps centers throughout the United States. Two of those are our original centers at which we began our program. Our graduates continue to earn some of the highest wages possible through the entry of the Job Corps Program.

The details of our growth as a program can't be covered in 5 minutes, but we can isolate some of the most important factors as follows:

Vocational skills training. A significant construction project on which students work and are expected to perform under rigorous, realistic job conditions.

An established network of apprenticeship training programs which provides many of our students continued training as they begin work.

A close relationship with contractors and manufacturers.

A solid training curriculum that keeps up with the latest technologies and demands in the construction industry.

Vocational skills training, which we refer to as VST, is the foundation of our training program and a large reason for our success in placement and retention. We aggressively duplicate real-work situations. Feedback from contractors and employers have proven the merit of this approach to training.

We have targeted hundreds of projects throughout the communities of this Nation and performed renovations, restorations and even constructed buildings from the footers up. The savings to the taxpayer has been significant, and the quality of the work is outstanding. You have been provided information about one of those large-scale projects that saved over $320,000, and that was the Whitney Young Vocational Building.

Apprenticeship training and our relations with local unions throughout the United States has been crucial to the success of our program. Local unions have provided us a network of job placements throughout the country. Graduates have to go where the work is, and the local unions provide a way to move graduates from location to location, job to job. We have placed thousands of young people as a result of this valuable network and cooperation.

And because we are aggressive in maintaining and upgrading our training standards, we have built a reputation. Employers know we will place properly skilled youth on their projects and job sites. Our training achievement record, TARs, from which student progress is evaluated, are updated continuously to keep pace with

the industry demands. As a result, more often than not, union and nonunion contractors alike are willing to hire our students.

When they graduate, we find our students jobs and assist in their search for housing and transportation. On January 1, 1998, we enacted a 6-month followup program that will help us track our graduates through their first months on the job. Our network of union apprenticeship programs also has a built-in tracking system that helps us with this effort. The plan is national in scope.

In my 30 years as administrator, I have been rewarded time and time again with many accomplishments these young people have made. There is nothing more gratifying than seeing a former student reach retirement and ultimately receive a pension through the labor and management collective bargaining agreement. However, for me, the biggest reward has been seeing the student go full circle. After graduating Job Corps, completing their apprenticeship, reaching journey status and establishing themselves in the industry, they have turned to our program over a decade later to become an instructor. That, for me, is the ultimate definition of how this program provides a return on its investment.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and distinguished Members for allowing me to testify.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you, Mr. Wolf.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wolf follows:]

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY

Gilbert A. Wolf
National Administrator
Plasterers & Cement Masons Job Corps Training Program
July 29, 1998

Good Morning.

My name is Gilbert Wolf. I am the Director of the National Plastering Industry's Joint Apprenticeship Trust Fund and the Administrator of the Plasterers & Cement Masons Job Corps Training Program.

The Plasterers and Cement Masons Job Corps Training Program has been in operation for over 30 years. In 1965 a GAO report cited Job Corps for training in dead-end jobs. As a result, in 1967 we were asked by the Department of Interior to operate a Job Corps Training Program at three centers: Occonaluftee in North Carolina; Great Onyx in Kentucky and Harper's Ferry in West Virginia. We now operate 60 training programs at 39 Job Corps Centers throughout the U.S. Two of those are the original Centers at which we began our program and our graduates continue to earn some of the highest wages possible throughout the entire Job Corps program.

The details of our growth as a program cannot be covered in five minutes. But we can isolate some of the most important factors as follows:

- Vocational Skills Training - Significant construction projects on which students work and are expected to perform under rigorous and realistic industry conditions;

- An established network of Apprenticeship Training Programs which provide many of our students continued training as they begin work;

- Close relationships with contractors and manufacturers;

- A solid training curriculum that keeps up with the latest technologies and demands in the construction industry.

Vocational Skills Training (VST) is the foundation of our training program and a large reason for our success in placement and retention. We aggressively duplicate real-work situations for the students to prepare them for a tough and demanding career in construction. Feedback from contractors and employers has proven the merit of this approach to training. Our Job Corps graduates are finding and keeping jobs at a higher rate because they have had on-the-job experience during their training

We have targeted hundreds of projects throughout the communities of this nation and performed renovations, restorations and even constructed buildings from the ground up. The savings to taxpayers has been significant and the quality of the work is outstanding. You've been provided with information about one large-scale project that saved over $320,000: The Whitney Young Vocational Building. That is just one example of the quality of training we are providing.

Apprenticeship training and our relationship with Local Unions throughout the United States has also been crucial to the success of our program. Local Unions have provided us with a network for job placements throughout the county. Our graduates have to go wherever the work is if they are going to survive in this industry. Local Unions provide a way to help move graduates from location-to-location and job-to-job.

Whereas most industries are relatively stable, construction and agricultural industries are at the mercy of mother nature. When there are weather stoppages, we don't get paid -- a concept we aren't always able to get through to our students. But we have to be able to go where the work is if we're going to stay employed and Union programs assist in that mobility. We have managed to place thousands of young people throughout the country as a result of this valuable network and cooperation.

And because we are aggressive in maintaining and upgrading our training standards, we have built a reputation. Employers know we will place properly skilled youth on their projects and job sites. Our Training Achievement Records (TARs) from which student progress is evaluated, are updated continuously to keep pace with industry demands. As a result, more often than not, union and non-union contractors alike are willing to take a risk on our graduates despite their troubled pasts and potential for difficulty.

When they graduate, we find our students jobs and assist in their search for housing and transportation. On January 1, 1998 we enacted a 6 month follow-up plan that will help us track our graduates through their first months on the job. Our network of union apprenticeship programs also has a built-in tracking system that helps us with this effort. The plan is national in scope and has revealed valuable information on how family and other relationships are impacting job retention and performance.

In my thirty years of training Job Corps students, I have been rewarded time and time again with the many accomplishments these young people have made. There is nothing more gratifying than seeing a former student reach retirement and ultimately receive a pension through the Labor/Management Collective Bargaining Agreement.

However, for me, the biggest reward has been seeing a student go full circle. After graduating Job Corps, completing their apprenticeship, reaching journey status and establishing themselves in the industry, they returned to our program, over a decade later, to become an Instructor. That for me is the ultimate definition of how this program provides a return on its investment.

There is no better example of how Job Corps pays for itself in the long run because we train for careers that pay.

Allow me to thank the Chairman and distinguished Members of this Committee for the opportunity to share in this testimony

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Price.

Mr. PRICE. Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee on Human Resources, I am pleased to be here today to tell you just how successful Job Corps is in meeting its objectives. Today's Job Corps students are being given training to meet the demands of tomorrow's workplace. The performance-driven goals of Job Corps keeps our eyes, our instructors' eyes and our students' eyes on the prize. The prize is an entry-level job in a good career field.

I have been involved with the Job Corps Program for close to 14 years. I started as a placement specialist at the Charleston Job Corps Center in West Virginia. Today, I am proud to say I am the center director of the Potomac Job Corps Center located here in Washington, DC.

The center's goal is to train students for gainful employment in their chosen vocation. It is the center's intent to promote employability skills so that each student develops an entry-level vocational skill leading to employment and upward economic mobility.

Employability skills development begins upon a student's arrival at orientation. During the second week of enrollment, while in the occupational exploration program, students receive specific information about tradeofferings. In addition to learning information about job trends, qualifications, and salary ranges of vocations, students get in-class, hands-on experience on mock stations.

Based on their interest, results of assessment tools administered, and vocational counseling received, students select three vocational offerings. Once identified, students visit these three trades selected and participate in activities carefully planned and supervised by respective instructors. Before placement in a selected trade, the student returns to the instructor for an individual interview to assess commitment and suitability for the vocation.

Based on their trade choice, the counselor and placement staff meet with the student to set goals and tailor an individual employability plan. The employability plan is updated regularly and vocational counseling continues throughout a student's tenure in Job Corps.

The Potomac Job Corps Center has a total of 15 vocational tradeofferings. The Home Builders Institute provides training in seven of these areas; the Operative Plasterers, Cement Masons International Association provides training in two; the Transportation Communications Union International provides the advanced clerical and transportation training.

The center operates four vocational training programs, and we have two additional programs offered off center. The center works closely with National Training Contractors personnel to ensure that vocational training is coordinated and integrated with academic counseling, student records and placement. Each vocational instructor's evaluation includes the placement rate, job training match, average wage and completion rate of students assigned to the vocation. This encourages vocational instructors to take an active role in placing students.

The center employs a partners-in-placement philosophy, whereby the vocational and program support staff share responsibility in student placement.

Let me end my testimony with a success story of one of our graduates. The young lady I want to tell you about is Conita. Conita came to the Potomac Job Corps Center in 1993. She was a single parent with one child. She had only a 10th-grade education. She studied hard and earned her GED while at the center. She also impressed our cement masonry trade instructor Mr. Rosella Scott.

Mr. Scott helped Conita get into the local cement masons union and helped her find a job with a local construction company. That was nearly 5 years ago. Now she has completed the apprenticeship program and is a journeyman mason making $22 an hour.

Mr. Scott is a member of the local union and teaches apprenticeship classes for the union in the evenings. Mr. Scott is exactly the kind of teacher that makes Job Corps work. He knows what the union wants, he knows what local employers want, and he trains Job Corps students to fit their needs.

I am proud of Conita and all of my graduates. I would love to continue, but I will defer to the chairman and members of the subcommittee to answer any questions you may have.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you, Mr. Price.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Price follows:]

Subcommittee on Human Resources

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee on Human Resources, I am pleased to be here today to tell you just how successful Job Corps is in meeting the objectives set for it by the Government Performance and Results Act.

Today's Job Corps students are being given the best training to meet the demands of tomorrow's workplace. The performance-driven goals of Job Corps keep our eyes, our instructors' eyes, and our students' eyes on the prize. The prize is an entry-level job in a good career field.

How do I know it's working well? I have been involved with the Job Corps Program for 14 1/2 years. I started as a placement specialist at the Charleston Job Corps Center in West Virginia. Today, I am the Center Director of the Potomac Job Corps Center here in Washington, DC.

Potomac Job Corps Center is contracted to serve 505 students, 80 of which are non-residential commuters.

The center's goal is to train students for gainful employment in their chosen vocation. This all-inclusive program stimulates and develops each student's aptitudes and interests and maximizes learning through competency-based instruction. It is the center's intent to promote employability skills so that each student develops an entry level vocational skill leading to employment and upward economic mobility.

Vocational training at Potomac is an integral part of the students' overall education and is closely coordinated with academic, residential and counseling programs.

Employability skills development begins upon a student's arrival to Orientation. During this initial phase of training, staff articulate work place expectations. The vocational manager gives students an overview of the vocational program offerings and criteria for participation.

During the second week of enrollment, while in the Occupational Exploration Program, students receive specific information about trade offerings. Aptitude and interest assessment tools are used to assist students in selecting a vocation. Instructors and students from respective trades make presentations and answer questions.

In addition to learning information about job trends, qualifications and salary ranges of vocations, students get in-class hands on experience on mock stations. Based on their interest, results of the assessment tools administered and vocational counseling received, students select three vocational offerings.

Once identified, students visit the three trades selected and participate in activities carefully planned and supervised by the respective instructor. Instructors formally evaluate each student's participation. Before placement in a selected trade, the student returns to the instructor for an individual interview to assess commitment and suitability for the vocation.

Based on the trade choice identified, the counselor and placement staff meet with the student to set goals and tailor an individual employability plan to help the student achieve successful program completion. Labor market information from the students home community is discussed at length. For example, if a student wants to study landscaping but few jobs will be available, the student is counseled to either consider a different trade with greater employment opportunities or to explore and consider relocation to an area where landscaping has greater employment opportunities.

The employability plan is updated regularly and vocational counseling continues through out a student's tenure in Job Corps.

Potomac Job Corps Center has a total of 15 vocational offerings.

National Training Contractors (NTC) construction trades with Home Builders' Institute (HBI) provides training in 7 vocational areas.

Operative Plasterers, Cement Masons International Association (OPCMIA) provides training in 2 vocational areas.

Transportation Communications Union (TCU) International provides Advanced Clerical and Transportation Training

The center operates 4 vocational training programs on center with two off center training programs: cosmetology training at Ballou STAY high school and certificate programs offered at UDC.

The center works closely with NTC personnel to ensure proper coordination with academics, counseling, student records/ placement, and other functions.

The center utilizes local industry personnel to provide expertise in their particular fields through a vocational advisory council.

The council consists of representatives for each of the center's vocations. Council members are oriented on applicable Job Corps documents and regulations. They review available equipment, instructional techniques, physical facilities, curriculum, placement, job match statistics, and work experience utilization. All information is evaluated and suggestions made for improvements and changes.

Job Corps carefully selects the trades offered at any center. The prescriptive nature of the program makes sure those trades are generating jobs - good jobs - for our graduates. When the statistics show a trade is not generating those good jobs, the program is placed on probation and watched very closely. If job placements do not turn around in a matter of months, the trade could be discontinued at that Job Corps center.

Trades are not discontinued wholesale. Job Corps looks at local market conditions. Hypothetically, if security provides a very successful trade at the Potomac Job Corps Center, but not at, say, the Woodland Job Corps Center, then it can be discontinued at Woodland and continue to operate at Potomac.

Each vocational instructors' evaluation includes the placement rate, job training match, average wage, and completion rate of students assigned to the vocation. This encourages vocational instructors to take an active role in placing students. Each instructor is involved daily in working toward placing students through training, job development and networking.

Vocational instructors are also required to stay abreast of employment demands and requirements in their field through participation on the vocational advisory council, memberships in related trade associations, contacts with local employers, field trips to local businesses, employment advertisements, etc,.

The primary responsibility of the vocational instructor is to provide quality, work related vocational training to ensure that the training leads to gainful employment.

Throughout the training process, vocational instructors give students information regarding the benefits of employment, employment requirements, acceptable work ethics, and additional training and employment opportunities.

They invite local employers, trade specialists and graduates successfully employed in the trade to provide presentations, inspirational talks, and discussions that will assist in instilling confidence and increase motivation.

The center employs a "partners in placement" philosophy where vocational and program support staff share involvement in student placement.

Let me end my testimony with the stories of three successful graduates of the Potomac Job Corps Center. I could give you hundreds more, but these three are good examples.

The first young woman I want to tell you about is named Conita. In keeping with Privacy Act constrictions, I will tell you only her first name.

Conita came to Potomac in 1993. She was a single parent with one child. She had only a 10th grade education. She studied hard and earned her GED. She also impressed our cement masonry trade instructor, Mr. Rosella Scott.

Mr. Scott helped Conita get into the local Cement Mason's Union and helped her find a job with a local construction company. That was nearly four years ago. Now, she has completed the apprenticeship program and is a journeyman mason making $22 an hour.

Mr. Scott is a member of the local union and teaches the apprentice class for the union in the evenings. Mr. Scott is exactly the kind of teacher that makes Job Corps work. He knows what the union wants and what local employers want. He trains Job Corps students to exactly fit into the local employment market.

Another student of whom I am very proud is Morning. She, too, was a single parent when she came to Potomac.

Equally proud of her is Ms. Jackie Berry, a Transportation Communications Union instructor and placement coordinator at Potomac. Ms. Berry helped Morning land a job as a contract administrator in an office in Maryland. Morning is now earning $10 an hour.

Nichiea came to Potomac with a high school diploma, but no marketable job skills. Nichiea only sporadically held part-time jobs before Job Corps. Her instructor in the security trade helped her set goals and learn the trade. After completion, she took a job with the GSA and is now earning a handsome salary in a full-time position that she has held for nearly a year.

I am proud of these and all my Potomac graduates. I would love to continue reciting success stories, but I will defer to you, Mr. Chairman, and members of the subcommittee, to answer any questions you may have.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Payne.

Mr. PAYNE. Congressman Shays and distinguished members of the committee, I am Aaron Payne, a Home Builders Institute Job Corps instructor at the Old Dominion Job Corps Center. I would like to tell you how Job Corps changed my life. I will also share how I became an HBI Job Corps instructor.

I grew up in Philadelphia. Before I was 18, I had dropped out of high school and got mixed up in gang activities and drug trafficking. I was what you'd call trouble. When a good friend of mine was shot and killed, that was my wake-up call. I enrolled in Job Corps after hearing about the program from a friend. I spent 15 months at the Old Dominion Job Corps Center in Monroe, VA, learning the basics about electrical wiring from my HBI instructor Thomas Elliott.

Mr. SHAYS. I will just ask you to move the mic a little closer and lower it down. I know it can get in the way of your reading, but it will help us hear. That is better. Thank you.

Mr. PAYNE. I will always remember Tom. He taught me not only the trade skills I needed, but prepared me mentally for the job site as well.

I first began to understand the value of HBI's national placement network when I got my first job with Arc Electric in Chesapeake, VA. I worked with my HBI national placement coordinator, Chip Moser. Chip did much more than give me the job lead. He also helped me prepare a résumé, get to the interview and get an apartment and car when I accepted the job.

After that, I returned to the Lynchburg area and worked as an electrician for Moores Electric for 5 years. That prepared me for my next job as a supervisor for Raymond Jackson Constructors, also in Lynchburg. During this time, I improved my skills and climbed up the career ladder to the levels of foreman and supervisor.

I heard about an opening for a Job Corps instructor about a year ago when Raymond Jackson Constructors was wiring a dormitory on the Old Dominion campus. I applied for the job, and now I train about 30 young people a year in electric wiring.

I am proud to work for Job Corps and for the Home Builders Institute. Job Corps is a national program, and HBI is a national training contractor. I regularly network with other instructors. We are a unified team, which I believe sets a fine example for students.

The national placement network in the field is essential to my job. No matter how well my students learn skills, they need to find good jobs, and that's where placement coordinators come in. They find quality jobs for students, and not minimum-wage jobs. We can network through different States and localities. The national network of employers provided by HBI and the National Association of Home Builders gives my students access to opportunities they'd never know about otherwise.

Just knowing I work for an association with 195,000 member companies makes me proud and excited. NAHB is the largest professional trade organization for home builders nationwide. It's a great resource for me and my students.

I myself am proof of the success of HBI's training and placement process. Since I graduated from Job Corps more than 10 years ago,

I've always kept in touch with my placement coordinator and my instructor. It's a relationship that doesn't end when your training ends.

My students are also proof of the success of Job Corps' vocational training and placement system. They feel secure knowing they'll have access to quality jobs when they graduate. That means they're even more motivated to succeed and to learn all they can in my shop.

As for my life, it's what we'd call good. I've got a wonderful family and a job that means so much to me. My life now is a far cry from being on the streets in Philadelphia with no direction. When I look at the faces of my students now, I see them turning from trouble into productive people.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you about my own Job Corps experiences and that of my students. I'll be glad to respond to any questions that you may have.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Payne follows:]

TESTIMONY OF AARON PAYNE
BEFORE THE CONGRESSIONAL SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM AND OVERSIGHT

July 30, 1998

Congressman Shays and distinguished members of the committee, I am Aaron Payne, a Home Builders Institute Job Corps instructor at the Old Dominion Job Corps Center. I'd like to tell you how Job Corps changed my life. I'll also share how I became an HBI Job Corps' instructor.

I grew up in Philadelphia. Before I was 18, I had dropped out of high school. I got mixed up in gang activity and drug trafficking. I was what you'd call "trouble." When a good friend of mine was shot and killed, that was my "wake-up call." I enrolled in Job Corps after hearing about the program from a friend. I spent 15 months at the Old Dominion Job Corps Center in Monroe, Virginia learning the basics about electrical wiring from my HBI instructor, Tom Elliott. I will always remember Tom. He taught me not only the trade skills I needed, but prepared me mentally for the jobsite as well.

I first began to understand the value of HBI's national placement network when I got my first job with Arc Electric in Chesapeake, VA. I worked with my HBI National Placement Coordinator, Chip Moser. Chip did much more than give me the job lead. He also helped me prepare a resume, get to the interview, and get an apartment and a car when I accepted the job. After that, I returned to the Lynchburg area and worked as an electrician for Moores Electric for five years. That prepared me for my next job as a supervisor for Raymond Jackson Constructors, also in Lynchburg. During this time, I improved my skills, and "climbed up the career ladder" to the levels of foreman and supervisor. I heard about an opening for a Job Corps instructor about a year ago, when Raymond Jackson Constructors was wiring a dormitory on the Old Dominion campus. I applied for the job, and now I train about 30 young people a year in electrical

wiring. I am proud to work for Job Corps and for the Home Builders Institute. Job Corps is a national program, and HBI is a national training contractor. I regularly network with other instructors. We are a unified team, which I believe sets a fine example for students. The national placement network in the field is essential to my job. No matter how well my students learn skills, they need to find good jobs. And that's where placement coordinators come in. They find quality jobs for students, not minimum wage jobs. We can network through different states and localities. The national network of employers provided by HBI and the National Association of Home Builders gives my students access to opportunities they'd never know about otherwise. Just knowing I work for an association with 195,000 member companies makes me proud and excited. NAHB is the largest professional trade organization for home builders nationwide. It's a great resource for me and my students.

I myself am proof of the success of HBI's training and placement process. Since I graduated from Job Corps more than seven years ago, I have always kept in touch with my placement coordinator and my instructor. It's a relationship that doesn't end when your training ends. My students are also proof of the success of Job Corps' vocational training and placement system. They feel secure knowing they'll have access to quality jobs when they graduate. That means they're even more motivated to succeed and to learn all they can in my shop.

As for my life — it's what I'd call good! I've got a wonderful family and a job that means so much to me. My life now is a far cry from being on the streets in Philadelphia with no direction. When I look at the faces of my students now, I see them turning from "trouble" into productive people.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you about my own Job Corps experience and that of my students. I'll be glad to respond to any questions you may have.

Mr. SHAYS. I just want to note for the record, Mr. Payne, that you have obviously been very helped by the Job Corps Program. And now you're finding you have an opportunity to give back to others who can be helped. It's important that you be here and you be a part of this hearing, as our other three panelists. Our other three panelists obviously take pride in the fact that they know there are others like you who have benefited tremendously from the program.

The purpose of this hearing is to do a number of things: one, to determine how Job Corps determines its own success and how we determine its success. I suspect our committee on a bipartisan basis is going to weigh in as to whether we think this issue of completers and advanced completers is helpful to the students and whether it's helpful for evaluation. I think we will be weighing in as well as to whether we are getting an accurate indication of training versus the job that someone ultimately gets.

Having said that, I'm going to say again, I believe that anyone who leaves a program and gets a job is on their way, provided there's further mentoring and guidance and so on, because I think almost any job is a plus for someone who's had no job, and obviously we need to get a handle on the whole issue of single source or sole source.

I'm going to invite our minority and majority staff to participate and ask some questions. Because we're in the last 2 weeks of Congress, there are a lot of other commitments for Members. Mr. Towns specifically wanted me to let you know he had a long-standing commitment. But this isn't going to be the first hearing, and we're going to be pursuing this more, and staff will be helping us in terms of writing the report.

But, Mr. Humphreys, my sense is you're one of nine national contractors, but the only business contractor of the nine; is that correct?

Mr. HUMPHREYS. I'm sorry, the only one?

Mr. SHAYS. The only business affiliation as opposed to labor; you represent the business side, am I accurate or not?

Mr. HUMPHREYS. We do represent employers.

Mr. SHAYS. Right. And, Mr. Wolf, you're one of eight national participants who represents the union side of this perspective as well; is that accurate to say?

Mr. WOLF. I'll explain it to you. It's very hard. Everybody grasps it the wrong way. The national trust is a national trust fund combined of labor and management, and its function was by the industry to deal with apprenticeship training——

Mr. SHAYS. But, basically, just to pursue that, my view is that you're involved, in a sense, in an apprentice program. In other words, in the trades, in particular, your organizations are bringing new workers. There are apprentices, they get trained, at the same time you're providing insurance benefits for your employees, retirement benefits in a lot of other cases. But this is a long-standing system in which you bring someone into the process through an apprentice program, correct?

Mr. WOLF. Correct. When we first came in to the program, we were really skeptical back in 1967. Times were a little bit different around town here, and when we came in to look at Job Corps,

that's why we went into three programs just to try it out and see what we could do with it. And what we found out was that we could train these young people who never had a chance. And in 1967, there's no way that any of the young people that we dealt with would have ever gotten into the apprenticeship programs, and this gave us that avenue to do that.

Mr. SHAYS. And, Mr. Price, you are someone who actually runs one of the job—1 of the 113—you're the director of 1 of the 113 Job Corps centers?

Mr. PRICE. That's correct.

Mr. SHAYS. And you've been involved for how long in that?

Mr. PRICE. Approximately 14 years.

Mr. SHAYS. OK. And, Mr. Payne, you are someone who both went through the program, and now you're a vocational instructor——

Mr. PAYNE. Yes, sir.

Mr. SHAYS [continuing]. With the skills that you learned through Job Corps and then actually improved and perfected as a laborer, as——

Mr. PAYNE. That's correct.

Mr. SHAYS. Yes. So I mean this is a good mixture here. I'd like you to—I'm going to say to you one of my concerns about sometimes confronting people on these issues, that we lock into bad testimony. And so what I'd love you to know is that we want to improve this program. That's the motivation here. But I am very perplexed that we have two levels, you know, a completer and an advanced completer.

In your own field outside of Job Corps, how do you—let's start with you, Mr. Wolf. How does the system work outside of Job Corps?

Mr. WOLF. Well, basically all apprentice programs work the same, but they're different. They have their own little avenue.

Mr. SHAYS. You mean plasters, electricians, all of them?

Mr. WOLF. Yes, all of the trades.

Mr. SHAYS. OK.

Mr. WOLF. Apprenticeship programs, if someone—if you were to ask someone to write a book on apprenticeship programs and how they work, they couldn't do it. They could give you a lot of paper, but they couldn't tell you how it works. You go into the apprenticeship programs, you get related training, and you work on the job. You are a hands-on person.

Mr. SHAYS. Right.

Mr. WOLF. And when you're working, you're working with all different people in the trade. Years ago and even today, they move apprentices around on a job, so they get a varied exposure to the trades. And they progress—their wage rates are escalated as they progress through the trade, along with their related training. And when they get to—I think I'll just take a figure like every 30 days or every 3 months, they will probably get a raise, but it varies from craft to craft.

Mr. SHAYS. So time and skill are reflected in an increase in the hourly wage to apprentices?

Mr. WOLF. Well, an apprentice will make—a hairy guess, a rule of thumb——

Mr. SHAYS. You start out with this individual who comes—forget—forget Job Corps now.

Mr. WOLF. You're talking about Job Corps?

Mr. SHAYS. Outside Job Corps. Forget it. I want you to forget it.

Mr. WOLF. A regular apprenticeship program.

Mr. SHAYS. Yes, a regular apprenticeship program.

I want to know how the trades determine success, and you go from one level to another level to another level. Give me the terminology from one level to another, besides just pay.

Mr. WOLF. Well, as hands skills, as he's evaluated on the job——

Mr. SHAYS. Hear my question again. Don't you have titles of levels of success through that program? Do you become apprentice and the next thing, you know, you're—if you're——

Mr. WOLF. Four years later you're a journeyman—that's not true. A program could either be 3 or 4 years, and it's scheduled out. I don't have all the documents or any of the other ones, but it's scheduled out in increments over the year. As you progress through the trade, you go from the basics, and you're escalated up and up and up. And that's in your related training. And your hand skills, the people who are coordinating the apprentice programs on the local level monitor them, report card per se, as to how they're doing.

They check with the people that they're working with, the contractor they're working for, and this is all evaluated by the joint apprenticeship committee, which is both management and labor together, as to how they progress. In some cases if a young person—and then they do this—you get more questions why not to do something from a young person than anything in the world, but they evaluate. It's like if they don't show up, like——

Mr. SHAYS. You're giving me details. What I'm looking for are broader categories here.

Mr. Humphreys, do you see where I'm going here?

And I'm going to come to you, Mr. Payne, because you've gone through a program.

What I want to know is, you start out as, what's the term, an apprentice?

Mr. WOLF. Yes. Apprentice, a beginning apprentice.

Mr. SHAYS. A beginning apprentice. And then what do you become; what's the next level?

Mr. WOLF. We don't have any titles like that. You're an apprentice until you get done.

Mr. SHAYS. OK. And until you get done means what?

Mr. WOLF. You become a journeyperson, a journeyman.

Mr. SHAYS. And once you're a journeyman, a journeyperson, a journeywoman, that's the final level?

Mr. WOLF. Some crafts get higher levels where you can go, you know.

Mr. SHAYS. But have you completed the program before you become a journeyman?

Mr. WOLF. No. When you complete, you become a journeyman.

Mr. SHAYS. Yes. You've got to be a journeyman first.

Now, Mr. Humphreys, can you respond in any way to what I've asked?

Mr. HUMPHREYS. Well, the last thing I want to do is obviously place myself in between the committee and the Department of Labor with regard to——

Mr. SHAYS. Let me just say this to you, Mr. Humphreys, we were very fair to Ms. Silva. And we will continue to be very fair to her. We just want to come to a conclusion. And I am a supporter of this program. So you're not coming between her. You're going to help her and me and others sort this out. So what you're doing now is you're educating me in a program. So the last thing that will happen is that you're in jeopardy. I have too much respect for her.

Mr. HUMPHREYS. What I meant is when dealing with terminologies, it's extremely difficult. Let me give you an example. One of the crafts that we teach in Job Corps is carpentry. If you take a carpentry training achievement record, I don't have one in front of me, but let's say it has 100 tasks on it, and if you completed all of those 100 tasks, you would be a generalist carpenter, meaning you could probably do crown molding, you could do trim, you could do rough carpentry. You could do a variety of skills.

We try to respond to the demands of employers in the industry. We go to employers, and they pretty much say to us, we don't need trim carpenters, we don't need journeyman carpenters. We need framers. We can take TAR. We can take the items that relate to safety, that relate to tool nomenclature, to the use of hand and power tools and those particular sets of scales that a framer needs to do his or her job well and complete those, let's say, hypothetically in 6 months or 7 months, rather than 12 months for the whole. That person then is placed in the industry because that's what the industry wants. They want a framer.

Now, you can call that a framer, you can call that a carpenter, but in the morning driving to work, if we all stopped at a construction site and saw a framing crew, we wanted to ask the person what do you call yourself, they're not going to say a framer, they're going to a say a carpenter. So we do train for the complete training and achievement record, but we also train at the demands of industries for sections of that training and achievement record.

Mr. SHAYS. I would say it would be a very wise decision if you in the process can place someone as a framer, and they don't need to know how to do molding yet and so on, and I would agree with you that they have completed a skill. It would be for me and for that individual, I think, important to know that's the skill they've completed. It would sure limit their options, though, if that's all they learned.

I don't want to beat a dead horse here, but for me it is an amazing thing to think that in some cases we've called people that they've completed a program—excuse me, that they basically completed the program, because I've always made an assumption that they went through the entire program, rather than part of it.

And so what you want me to know, something I think makes sense, you would want to match them to the skill. Then do you walk away, or do you expect it from then on? What happens?

Mr. HUMPHREYS. In a perfect world, we want every single student to complete the entire TAR and their GED for one of the reasons you just suggested.

Mr. SHAYS. TAR?

Mr. HUMPHREYS. Training and achievement record. We want them to complete the entire program for the very reason you suggested. Over the years it gives them more marketable skills as the industry changes. We do that with every single person.

We recognize that among our students there are some individuals who don't want to complete or probably could not complete. Maybe they couldn't be a fine trim carpenter, maybe they can't ever be a cabinet maker, but they can be a terrific framer or a rough carpenter or something else.

And so when an instructor like Aaron is looking at your students or working with your students, it doesn't matter if it's a public school or Job Corps, your students aren't the same. You recognize different skill levels and different abilities, and, therefore, you push students as far as you can push them. But they're not all the same.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Price, it would seem to me that you would want a system that could take someone from being a completer to an advanced completer and be able to recognize them, frankly, with a title as having achieved something. Why don't you? Why is it just this one level and then a final advanced completer, who truly, in my judgment, has completed the program? And is it just practice? Is it just tradition? I don't see the sense of it.

Mr. PRICE. It's hard for me to totally explain that. I can explain it from my center's perspective.

Mr. SHAYS. Well, you do it.

Mr. PRICE. Well, we try to take each student and have them complete the entire TAR, the entire TAR. We try to let them know that their options will be greater. It's a fact that they will earn—that their wages will be higher in most cases as a result of that.

Now, we are not successful in doing that all the time. Some students opt to leave once they've completed a certain step-off level. For those students, we counsel. That's one of the reasons for bringing back former students who've already been in the field and can tell of real-life experiences of how they can earn additional moneys by completing that TAR. But that certainly is our goal, and we try to counsel each student to do that.

I can give you an example, if I might, very quickly.

Mr. SHAYS. Sure. You don't have to rush.

Mr. PRICE. We had a student on a workplace learning experience at another facility I worked at. He was a welder. He was ready to complete the program and leave as soon as he had finished his work experience. Once he got there, he said, well, wait a minute, I have the skills to make as much as this gentleman makes over here; the only problem, he is certified in a level of welding that I have not completed. That went—after learning that, the student came back and said, I'm going to stay longer until I can get this additional training.

So it was for that student—it was beneficial to that student. He had the opportunity and had the resources to continue to stay in Job Corps. Some students, even though they realize that, may not be able to, but I certainly recognize that the student will be better off having completed more skills.

Mr. SHAYS. See, I wonder if your system doesn't contribute to that kind of attitude. That's what I'm wondering about. I'm wondering if saying you completed something makes someone have this

false sense that they truly have completed the program when they've completed one stage in a very important process that has many stages.

And that's the question. It seems, you know, sometimes when I use that kind of logic, there are a lot of reasons, but so far I still have a sense that that's my recommendation.

Mr. Payne, were you a completer or an advanced completer under the terminology?

Mr. PAYNE. An advanced completer.

Mr. SHAYS. OK. You went through the whole program?

Mr. PAYNE. Yes.

Mr. SHAYS. Describe to me how long you were in the program.

Mr. PAYNE. Fifteen months.

Mr. SHAYS. Fifteen months?

Mr. PAYNE. Yes.

Mr. SHAYS. Now, you brought it up, and I think it's very helpful that you did. You basically said you got in some trouble, and you got in legal trouble as well.

Mr. PAYNE. Right.

Mr. SHAYS. Now, were you remanded, sent to the Job Corps as an option to something else?

Mr. PAYNE. No, that was on a voluntary basis.

Mr. SHAYS. But that was not a court——

Mr. PAYNE. No court order or nothing like that.

Mr. SHAYS. Did you have to do some time, or did you have to—forget it, it doesn't matter whether you did time. Did you have to pay some kind of penalty for breaking the law, or did you not ever have to confront the law?

Mr. PAYNE. I never had to confront it.

Mr. SHAYS. OK. So you came to a conclusion, though, this was in your best interest to go into this program? When you went into it, were you happy that you did? Describe to me your emotions. How old were you at the time?

Mr. PAYNE. Seventeen at the time.

Mr. SHAYS. I notice when I went to the Job Corps program in New Haven, the range of ages was significant; I mean, one who might have been 17, and you had some of them who might have been 23, but they were all really in the same category of need and so on. But in this case, you were fairly young.

Did you have a GED, or did you have a high school degree?

Mr. PAYNE. No, I don't. I have a GED.

Mr. SHAYS. But when you went into the program, you didn't have a high school degree?

Mr. PAYNE. Before I went to the program, I obtained my GED.

Mr. SHAYS. So you went in this program. Was it what you anticipated?

Mr. PAYNE. Yes. Really the whole reason why I chose to go to Job Corps was to give me some type of trade just to do something other than what I was doing, which was basically nothing.

Mr. SHAYS. Now, you had, candidly, the good sense to know that. Was that something inate? Was that something your friends were telling you, a parent, a brother, sister? I mean, what gave you that conclusion?

Mr. PAYNE. Well, I had been thinking about, you know, trying to make some type of turnaround long before I considered Job Corps. I didn't know Job Corps was going to be that turnaround for me. There was a friend of mine who had enrolled into a program, I'm not exactly sure what center he had attended, but he had talked to me briefly about that, and that was an option for me.

And my surroundings had a whole lot to do with my decision-making. I mean, it was a lot going on as far as where I was living. I was brought up primarily in the projects, and it seemed like every day something different would happen. I would see somebody die or somebody go to jail, things of that nature. So that was basically what helped me make my decision.

Mr. SHAYS. The Old Dominion Job Corps Center, is that the program that you went in as well?

Mr. PAYNE. Yes, sir.

Mr. SHAYS. So you're an instructor in a school you graduated from?

Mr. PAYNE. Yes.

Mr. SHAYS. That's kind of nice.

Describe to me, and then I'm going to come back, describe to me why you think so few students become advanced completers as the term is used?

Mr. PAYNE. Well, dealing with the electrical training for one, you have various areas in the trade from residential to commercial to industrial-type wiring. And you will have different types of electricians. You may have some—and you have some companies that their foundation of work may primarily be in the residential field versus some that may strictly deal with commercial or industrial. And you're going to have that in Job Corps as a whole.

I have students that will do better in residential than maybe, you know, on a first level. I have two levels on my training achievement record, which is an A and B level. Some of them will do well in an A level and then complete the B level also. But some of them, they will primarily stay at the A level status.

Mr. SHAYS. A level is less complex, it requires less training?

Mr. PAYNE. Yes.

Mr. SHAYS. OK.

Mr. PAYNE. Yes, it is. It goes over the basics of electrical theory.

Mr. SHAYS. And A level includes completion?

Mr. PAYNE. Yes, it does.

Mr. SHAYS. What does B level include?

Mr. PAYNE. B level is more of an advanced—move of an advanced level of an electrician. When they leave from there, they are what we consider a preapprentice, and you have that same format laid out in the real construction world. You may, you know, be a helper or up to a preapprentice, apprentice and, after your apprenticeship, turn into a journeyman, a foreman, on up the level like that.

Mr. SHAYS. I want you to walk me through that slowly. That's in the private sector?

Mr. PAYNE. That's in the private sector.

Mr. SHAYS. Give me the levels again.

Mr. PAYNE. You may be——

Mr. SHAYS. You start out as an apprentice? Sorry.

Mr. PAYNE. No, a helper.

Mr. SHAYS. A helper.

Mr. PAYNE. Yes, which is considered more or less someone who is basically there for the journeyman.

Mr. SHAYS. Yes.

Mr. PAYNE. Parts getter, things of that nature.

Mr. SHAYS. Helper.

Mr. PRICE. Preapprentice, apprentice, journeyman, foreman, crew supervisor, and possibly supervisor over the entire department.

Mr. SHAYS. You described basically about seven levels.

Mr. PAYNE. Right.

Mr. SHAYS. I'm not there now, but when I was learning karate, you had all of these different levels of belts, and then even when you got to black belt, you had 10 levels. If they just went from the first belt to black belt and no level in between, it would be very hard for me to evaluate my progress. And, also, there were incentives to reach that next level.

What's wrong with my logic that says there should be more than just completion and advanced completion?

Mr. PAYNE. Well, back to the job market once again. It all depends on what type of company that these individuals will be placed with. We have a very—have a large array of companies that we do place our students with once they do complete the program, and as I stated——

Mr. SHAYS. Complete the program, meaning that as Job Corps defines complete the program, not as you did it?

Mr. PAYNE. Right, in either level. Some people dealing with electricity will not be able to obtain the level of achievement that I have.

Mr. SHAYS. With an electrician, you have—according to GAO, you have 79 tasks, and 56 of those tasks have to be completed, which is 71 percent of the total percentagewise. So you're saying with an electrician, you've at least got to do 71 percent of the total that it takes to be an advanced?

Mr. PAYNE. Exactly.

Mr. SHAYS. You're pretty close to being advanced; you're almost three-fourths of the way there.

Mr. PAYNE. Right. That B level that I talked about earlier is more or less putting the finishing touches.

Mr. SHAYS. Yes. See, what it seems to be with health occupations and electricians, probably because of, you know, other elements—I mean electrician, it can be dangerous work if you're not well-schooled. So you probably need a large—a higher base before you can be entering into the job market.

What I'm hearing all of you say in so many words is that a completer is someone who can meet the barest minimum in order to get out into the work force. That's kind of what I'm hearing. Is there anything you want to say?

Mr. PAYNE. Well, let's talk about just the residential aspect of my trade.

Mr. SHAYS. The residential. You say basically residential doesn't require as many skills?

Mr. PAYNE. I'm not saying that. What I'm saying is you can obtain your journeyman level dealing with residential wiring. That doesn't make you any less of an electrician as if you were dealing

with like plant maintenance. You're still considered an electrician. It doesn't matter.

Mr. SHAYS. I hear you.

Well, an electrician, you gain 71 percent before you're a completer. When you're a welder, 28 percent. Let me—what I'm going to do is—yes, sir?

Mr. HUMPHREYS. May I just make one comment?

Mr. SHAYS. Yes.

Mr. HUMPHREYS. In determining the step-off levels, if you will, in a particular trade, that's not—that's not a level that we arbitrarily make or set, or the Department of Labor. That's what the construction industry, the carpenters or the plumbers or whoever say this is what it takes to do this task. You need to know this, this, this, and that is your step-off level. But industry tells us what that is; it's not our decision.

Mr. SHAYS. I don't even mind the term "step-off level," you know, and you have completed—you've completed up to that step-off level, and you're ready to go out into the environment. I'm not even criticizing the fact that you may only need 28 skills to be an initial welder. That's not where I'm kind of coming from. But I'd love that welder to know more skills, and the gap between 36 out of the 128 skills. But I would love the program to have tremendous incentives for that individual to go beyond 36.

But if I were the welder, I might say, I'm just not sure, there's too big a gap; heck, I can already be a completer at 36, you know. I'm there.

Do you want to say something, Mr. Wolf?

Mr. WOLF. Yes. We have an advanced program, and our advanced program is set up primarily for a motivating factor amongst all of our students nationwide. To get into our advanced program, you have to have completed 70 percent of your TARs. You had to have certain ratings on your interviews with the personal interviews with your instructors, and your driver's license and all this stuff behind you, and completed all the other programs that Job Corps has, and then they get to go to this advanced program.

Now, the advanced program is set up with machinery that's very costly, and Job Corps can't afford to buy it for other programs, and we go around the country doing projects, which pays for itself. And so it's the motivating factor of all of our people to go to that advanced program.

Now, there, that program, if you look at our list, as far as the value of the program, is the highest in our country and our program, it's 100 percent. They place 100 percent. And it shows that they gain more money from that program, too. But that's the way we use that program. We have equipment that other centers don't have.

For instance, we just bought a curb and gutter machine, which is quite an operation. It's a computer and all that kind of stuff like that, a beautiful piece of equipment. They get the training on this equipment, which they can't get at the centers where they're at.

Mr. SHAYS. It's just very hard to evaluate a program when you only have two levels, and evaluating the program isn't just for funding determination, but evaluation, it strikes me, will enable—I think competition is the healthy thing, even among Job Corps

centers. I think some States do wonderful jobs in welfare reform, and some don't. But you have these wonderful laboratories in a sense, and through having the various States do different programs, we're then able to say what do we like best.

I would love to be able to say, well, you know, your Job Corps program, you really are quite successful, but we evaluate success in ways that we can see the fine differences. If we just lump completer and advanced completer, and if we just say, OK, you get a job—here you got this advanced skill, and then you got a minimal starting job that doesn't match your skill, I don't want the center to get credit for that, because I think it distorts our understanding of the program in making improvements.

The bottom line is, I think it disguises bad programs. And I think there are some very good Job Corps programs out there that are truly matching people to the job skill, and others that are not, but you won't know the difference between them.

Mr. WOLF. Let me add another equation here in the equation. A step-off level to us, now we're talking about the real world, what's going on, we got a program going, and zero tolerance kicks in, and for whatever reason, he's thrown off the center, or she. Now, we're at a level, we got a lot invested in this person, and if we were required to say—well, we would say they're not a completer, but if they have completed like 65 percent of their TAR, they're a completer, and we place them in the job. We don't just discard those people. We go out and place them, because we got a lot of money. Our industry needs these people.

Mr. SHAYS. I agree, and what I would do is find a way to say, yes, they completed stage 1, 2 and 3.

Mr. WOLF. That's what we do——

Mr. SHAYS. So they are completer of stage 3 of a 5-stage program.

Mr. WOLF. That's what we do.

Mr. SHAYS. But that's not what's coming back to us, and that's—and we'll see how well—how it's done in the system, but that to me is the way I would describe it. And good for you.

I want to get to Ms. Branson, but, Mr. Price, I will let you comment.

Mr. PRICE. I just wanted to piggyback on what you said. When students leave, there is no misunderstanding as to what level they've completed, what skills they have been signed off on.

Mr. SHAYS. Internally?

Mr. PRICE. Well, with that student, too, when they go to an employer, to look at their skill levels of what they've completed, I just want to make sure that we understand that.

Mr. SHAYS. OK. But I don't think we compare centers based on that level. We compare them based on completer or advanced completer. That's what I understand. And so, for instance, if your center was getting to stage 2 quite often, and another center was getting to stage 3, that's interesting to us. If also stage 3 was matching them to a stage 3 level of employment, and your center was, that would be important. Then we would sit down and say, OK, how come, and then you would go to the center and say, how come, and then you would incorporate some change, and then you say things they are doing.

So anyway, Ms. Branson, you have the floor.

Let me just state for the record, we're allowing staff to participate, because it's very helpful, particularly when we don't have Members present. I like to do that, but just don't tell the Speaker.

Ms. BRANSON. I won't if you won't.

Mr. SHAYS. You won't if I won't.

Ms. BRANSON. You know, I think that maybe the problem is a difference between counting and training. And I understand, I think, where Mr. Shays is going. If everybody is not counting the same thing, then ultimately you don't know if everyone is training the same way. Is that part of it?

Mr. SHAYS. Yes, that's part of it.

Ms. BRANSON. OK. So I don't know whether Job Corps should do better counting or whether it's up to the centers to do better training. It doesn't sound like the training component is the problem. It sounds like the counting component is a problem, and whether or not one can develop training criteria nationwide that can all be counted in a systematic way. I think that's the problem.

I think that's the problem they tried to solve with the TARs method. And it's not clear to me that it's understood generally whether or not that method actually works.

But I want to ask this question that Mr. Towns would have asked, especially I would like Mr. Payne——

Mr. SHAYS. That Ms. Branson wrote.

Ms. BRANSON. No, Ms. Branson doesn't always write questions; in consultation with Mr. Towns, you know.

Mr. SHAYS. I know.

Ms. BRANSON. I think Mr. Payne should consider this. It seems that Job Corps trainers are not merely providing knowledge about a trade, but they also serve as mentors to the young people in the program. I know that's not part of the Job Corps job description for their employees, but Mr. Payne and anyone else on the panel, would you like to address how this mentoring relationship may help students, in the long run, achieve success?

Mr. PAYNE. For my students to be able to have something to compare it to, that right there is—you know, says a lot. For them to see the end result of what the program can actually do for them, that makes them strive that much harder to do the best that they can possibly do. And I'm just glad that I can be a part of that for them.

Ms. BRANSON. And that's because you share a lot of the same characteristics with those students?

Mr. PAYNE. Exactly. I can relate to basically any situation that they bring to the table. You know, I can talk to them about any issue, whether it be, you know, home life, dormitory life, whatever. I've been through the whole thing that they're going through right now, and that means a lot to them to be able to confide in someone like that.

Mr. HUMPHREYS. Being a good Job Corps teacher or a instructor is a tough job. You have to be father and mother. You've got to be a counselor. You've got to be an instructor, trade instructor, craft knowledge, life skills, being to work on time, proper worth ethic, attitude, give 8 hours of hard work a day. So it's tough being in that job, but that's all part of being a Job Corps instructor.

The mentoring program you mentioned is a program that we're working with employees with. Most of our employers are small employers. We're not talking about huge companies like General Motors or Chrysler or something. We're talking about a small operation. They don't have a human resources department. What does mentoring mean to them? We're working with them to help them understand when they hire a Job Corps graduate, they hire someone who is in the industry for the first time, who has their first job, but you must treat them a little bit differently maybe than someone who you hired last week who is 39 or 49 years old.

So we have a publication that we're working on, it's very small, very user-friendly, for a small employer to say, these are some things that you need to do help assure success, not only for you and your employee, but to make them successful.

In our written testimony we give an example, an electrical contractor in Arizona who has hired, I think, nine of our Job Corps students. And he has more a formalized mentoring program, a little bit larger operation with a schedule base. He sits with them and with their foreman and goes over issues and questions, and this is how you can improve here, that kind of thing, to sort of make that transition. And because he does that, you know, he hires more Job Corps students because they're successful, and that's the kind of thing we're trying to establish with all employers.

Mr. PRICE. I think it's important to note that for many of our students, the vocational instructor, the residential staff become like their parents. So many of our students come from single-parent families. So many of our students have severed relationships with their families. And in order to keep them in the program, motivated and focused, our staff assumes many responsibilities.

We employ—we demand that all staff be available to mentor students, and we try to match them, and many times related to the specific problem that the student may have, or many times the natural gravitation of one student to a staff member, and many times it is that vocational staff member or several staff members.

Ms. BRANSON. I mean, after all, most of them are just kids anyway. We tend to forget that when we talk about all the problems that many of these young people have. But most of them are not old enough to vote. They're basically just kids.

One of the criticisms that Job Corps has faced is that it's too heavily reliant on the construction industry, that it doesn't keep up with new and emerging technology and career fields. Would any member of the panel like to address that allegation?

Mr. WOLF. Well, we're constantly working and evaluating ourselves. Each year we have a seminar with all of our instructors from all over the country where we deal with all technological changes in the industry and other programs. For instance, last year we zeroed in on SST training, social skills training, where our instructors now hold on a specific daily basis an hour on SST training.

And our philosophy behind SST training is that when we're working on a daily basis, and we're working on projects, things happen on projects, and you've got to stop and say, look, you can't do that in the real world to work, because if you do, you're going

to get fired. So the social skills training portion of our program is very important.

We have two, social skills training, which basically runs an hour a day, and our safety program, which we call tailgate safety, which is very important for these young people. You know, Job Corps is really the only place that you can train young people on power tools. You know the laws of different States require they can't go on jobs, they can't be near this.

But, yeah, we can train, and we've been very successful, knock on wood, but we are accident-free in our training of this. And it's so important for us to do this with the young people.

And even your previous question, I wanted to mention that we changed it from instructor to coach. Actually we're coaches, you know, our people are coaches, because you've got to deal with the individuals and all their problems, as I mentioned earlier, in the apprenticeship program. Let me tell you something, from the age of 16 to 19, they're all the same, I don't care whether they're in Job Corps or whether they're in the apprentice program, they've got the same dialog they use. They're the greatest mechanics in the world, and none of their cars work, and that kind of stuff. So an apprentice directly on the local level has to deal with them, and so does the instructors in Job Corps. It's a constant thing.

And the other thing of it is—is that these young people, and I don't know why, and I really feel sorry for them because they can't read, you know, and it really gets you when you see that, and they can't read when they come in there. Our policy in Job Corps is, if you come through that door, male or female, and give us some time with you, we'll make you into whatever craft you're going to. We don't—we don't have any kind of requirements or anything like that. And it's so important. And those instructors are so important. That's why we're constantly motivating the instructors, because they get down.

You know, all of these statistics and everything, everybody harps on what you lose, you know, and it does, it really gets you. If you train somebody, and, you know, they're good, and they go out and, oh, God, what they do to you, the employer gets mad at you, says this is no good and all that kind of stuff, that really gets you down. But you have the other 75 percent of the people you're successful, really, that's good. But that one, that really bothers you why did that happen.

We just had that happen out in Kansas. We had a young person who was—we considered to be excellent. He won't go to work, and he won't even talk to us. We can't even evaluate ourself, where did we go wrong here.

Our industry needs these people. They need them. I mean, we can place everybody that we could put together, but it takes time to train people. Once you place them on a job, you get a new person in, and something happens and all that kind of stuff, but it's very important with these young people, and then they look toward you for guidance, and it's our obligation to do that.

Mr. HUMPHREYS. I would like to comment on the comment you made about there are too many construction trades and high technology and all of that. I hope Job Corps won't start down that slippery slope, because if you look at the community colleges and look

at the vocational technical schools, there are virtually no construction programs left in the area of voluntary tech schools. Everyone is caught up with high tech.

There are many of us that can't be in high tech. I couldn't be a computer programmer if my life depended on it. A lot of others can. For many of our Job Corps students, the construction industry offers the very, very best opportunity for them to be successful, to make something of themselves, to have a career, to earn a good wage, and to become—if they have a little bit of entrepreneurial spirit, start their own companies.

After you've been a carpenter for X years and get a pickup truck, and the next thing you know, you're a small remodeler, maybe you're a builder. You don't have those kind of opportunities in the high technology industry, and you don't in many others. So I hope that Job Corps will continue to have a significant construction cluster.

Ms. BRANSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SHAYS. I thank you for your really fine questions and also the responses.

Mr. Wolf, what you trigger in me is, first, I love your passion. Your sincerity really comes through, as do all of you, but I appreciated your statement. I would love to be able to evaluate Job Corps based on value added. It may be that you get someone so—you know, if they weren't in Job Corps, they would be nowhere. So you may bring them up to a level where they come close to being completers, as you described them, and that's a significant event.

So I don't mean to belittle that. That's a very significant event. So we may need to, in the process of making sure we are clear on the terms, also find ways to recognize the benefit of Job Corps just in terms of its social benefit.

Let me turn to Vincent Chase, who is a staff on the majority side, and if he would like to ask some questions, too. My objective is actually to conclude in 10 minutes so I can go vote and not hold you up and then have you have to wait, so we're going to try to conclude.

Vinnie.

Mr. CHASE. Thank you.

Mr. Price, first of all, I was very impressed with your center when I visited you last spring. I was very impressed with the enthusiasm on the part of the staff, as well as the students, and the various training programs that we spent some time in.

In your Job Corps career, you started out as a placement specialist. I'm curious to know, did you find it easier to place an advanced completer or a completer?

Mr. PRICE. During the time I was a placement specialist in Charleston, WV, we had one of the highest unemployment rates going. The economy was just terrible. It was difficult to place students, period. But certainly the more skills that each student brought to the table, it made it much easier to sell that student.

Mr. CHASE. OK. To our two national training contractors, can a completer enter an apprenticeship program?

Mr. HUMPHREYS. Can a completer enter an apprenticeship program?

Mr. CHASE. Right. Once he or she completes your training program, can a completer get into an apprenticeship program?

Mr. HUMPHREYS. Yes.

Mr. WOLF. They have priority of entry.

Mr. CHASE. Step 1?

Mr. WOLF. Pardon.

Mr. CHASE. Can a step 1 completer get an apprenticeship?

Mr. WOLF. In the National Standards of Apprenticeship, there's a clause in there which makes room for a completer. They call it priority of entry, so many hours in a pretraining program. They have priority of entry into the apprenticeship program. You understand, we've got to deal with hometown plants and all this kind of stuff, so like in New York, there's one; in Chicago, there's another one, they got the hometown. And this priority of entry provides us an avenue where we can get people in, into those programs.

Mr. CHASE. OK. Each State is different in terms of the requirements for apprenticeship programs?

Mr. WOLF. Yes.

Mr. CHASE. OK. How does that fit in with your policy that any completer can get into an apprenticeship program?

Mr. WOLF. Well, the national programs are standards, but they can be adjusted locally, and they do that to fit the geographical areas.

The way we handle it, our field people who do placement, they are in constant contact with the local areas. And we know when they got openings, and we get people in prior, get their names in on the list. Some of them have lists and all this kind of stuff. But our field people have a constant dialog with the local representatives around the country and in the local union.

And we also deal with—I know this sounds a little bit confusing, but the joint apprenticeship committees in many, many areas have full control over the apprenticeship programs. It's not in the hands of the local unions, per se, it's in the hands of the joint apprenticeship committee. And they have a standard set up where you submit your name, and you go in for interviews, and they interview, and we do all of that. So what—we try to be ahead of ourself as far as placement is concerned with young people.

We see what we got coming, we've got it all over. We've got a count of everybody we've got in training, who is going to be available, where they're at in their status of training, so we know where the jobs are at, and we provide this to the instructors, telling them where we have this placement at.

Mr. CHASE. The last question. In reviewing the national contracts, it struck me that I couldn't find any language that specifically outlined or required a number of apprenticeships, in other words, a standard in the contract that says that in a program year, you are going to have X number of students in an apprenticeship program. Is there any reason why that isn't in the contract?

Mr. WOLF. Well, they do it by percentages. That varies all across the country. Here again it goes into a local—a local autonomy, and they have different—I think—let's take the District, here, I think they set up a system where it was one to one, like one apprentice to a journeyman, like Clark. Clark had a project, this was all negotiated, and to get—to get trainees in. And his negotiations was set

like for every journeyman on a job, there will be an apprentice. And this varies. That was a project agreement. And it varies across the country, 1 to 2, 1 to 3, 1 to 4.

Mr. SHAYS. Let me say, I want to ask three questions that my staff wrote just so you know we do it on both sides of the aisle, but there are questions that I need to make sure that are asked.

Also, I want to say for the record it was very appropriate for us to have staff. I was poking fun when I said don't tell the Speaker, we do allow staff to craft questions in other committees as well.

What would be the appropriate length of time on the job to determine a successful placement? Mr. Humphreys. I need quick answers on this. What would be the appropriate length of time to determine a successful placement?

Mr. HUMPHREYS. Let me give you a quick answer and qualify it. Let's say 6 months. And the reason I qualify it, the construction industry, you typically work yourself out of a job, unless you're involved in service work and you move from job to job and company to company.

Mr. SHAYS. Fair enough.

Mr. Wolf, do you agree with that?

Mr. WOLF. Well, I don't like to say that, 6 months. I like to go by times. Nobody likes that. You know, you can pass through time and never get——

Mr. SHAYS. Just give me a sense.

Mr. WOLF. I'm in a classroom 6 hours, I've got training for 6 hours.

Mr. SHAYS. But in other words, is a successful job placement 30 days?

Mr. WOLF. No.

Mr. SHAYS. Six months, a year?

Mr. WOLF. Is it successful? Well, I think we're—I don't know where we're at right now. I guess our average is between 7 and 9 months. That's what we're working on.

Mr. SHAYS. But in other words, to be successful at job placement, they've got to be there?

Mr. WOLF. It's got to be more than 7 months, I would think.

Mr. SHAYS. I'm getting a sense.

Mr. Price, what do you think?

Mr. PRICE. I would like to see a year to give that student actually a chance to develop his or her life.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Payne.

Mr. PAYNE. A year.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you, that's helpful.

How do you determine a training-related job match accurately reflects the participant's training? How do we do that? That's not going to be an easy answer, but I have 2 minutes here. The question is, how do you determine a training-related job match actually reflects the participant's training? I'll just take an answer.

Mr. HUMPHREYS. Within your job, if you use the skills, some of the skills that you learned while studying that trade, that may well be a job training match.

Mr. SHAYS. So you want the skills to match the job training—you want the job training to match the skills necessary in the job?

Mr. HUMPHREYS. Right.

Mr. WOLF. Yes.

Mr. SHAYS. I mean, that's pretty basic. And then finally let me just ask this last question——

Mr. WOLF. Can I say something here?

Mr. SHAYS. Yes.

Mr. WOLF. You know, let me say—let's say this. I place a person. Actually we train people to work. Nobody wants to work any more. We train them to work. OK, here we made a placement in your State for, I forgot, a roofing company. We placed one of our people with a roofer, still working, and he's making $12 or $13 an hour now. Now, we consider that, it's not in concrete and it's not in plaster, but we consider that to be a job-related placement. It's in the construction industry.

Mr. SHAYS. Yes. OK. What you probably taught him, though, was the skills about hard work and——

Mr. WOLF. Correct.

Mr. SHAYS. So maybe we need to find a way, though, but in terms of the skill that that individual learned, he learned very important skills, and I am saluting you, but some of the other skills they learn they didn't utilize in the job.

Mr. WOLF. Certainly.

Mr. SHAYS. And it would be nice to evaluate in two different ways the job training skills, the social skills, all the other, the work ethic and his trainability, because they obviously were able to train him. And he's—and it's a tough job. I've done roofing, and it is a tough job.

But I have about 4 minutes left, so I'm going to call it quits. I will say to you that you've been a wonderful panel, and you've been helpful to our trying to understand this program. And I know we could go on longer, but I thank you very much.

One last closing comment from each of you?

Mr. WOLF. Yes. I forgot to mention before I lost it——

Mr. SHAYS. What's that?

Mr. WOLF. But, you know, young people love to compete. One thing they do like to do is compete. And we have what—we've set up with these young people—we've set up competitions that they have to complete, both cement masons and the plasterers, and we put it on a regional basis, and last year we held over at the Building Museum where we had 30 of them, they competed. This also is very important to training, the competition.

Mr. SHAYS. It is. I do need to go. Let me just say, I think that our Job Corps people are blessed to have all of you involved in Job Corps, and thank you very much.

Mr. Humphreys, you have this one word you want to say.

Mr. HUMPHREYS. Mr. Chairman, NAHB is a conservative organization that people probably think competition came out of the Bible. Having said that, I'm aware that national training contractors, Job Corps a long time ago made a decision that we are the industry, and try to get as close to the industry as they could with the NTCs. I think that was a very good decision.

Mr. SHAYS. Well, thank you. It was a wonderful decision to have all four of you here today. Thank you very much. Hearing closed. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 1:06 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

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