

Investing in Tomorrow's Workforce Act

Senator Durbin

Nearly 50 percent of jobs in the United States could be at risk for automation. In Illinois, up to 25 percent of the employed labor force is at high risk of being impacted by automating technologies, which equates to 1.5 million workers. Advancements in artificial intelligence are revolutionizing industries across the nation, and a survey by the World Economic Forum (WEF) indicates that 41 percent of employers intend to downsize their workforce as AI automates certain tasks. According to the WEF survey, 77 percent of employers also plan to reskill and upskill existing workers to address the ramifications of automation. An International Monetary Fund report also found that economies with higher robot density see a larger increase in inequality in the medium term. Jobs that are most affected by automation are those held predominantly by groups that are already vulnerable, such as low-income earners and people of color.

Opportunities for Job Growth

At the same time, automation has the potential to increase worker productivity and create new employment opportunities in occupations such as coding, advanced manufacturing, mechanics, and cybersecurity. Jobs that require knowledge of digital technology have tripled in recent years, and the National Skills Coalition has found that 92 percent of jobs today require digital skills. This shift toward greater automation opens the door for employees to work alongside new automation technologies rather than being replaced by these technologies, and investments in worker transition programs will be even more essential as we focus on an economic recovery that benefits all Americans.

The Solution: Invest in American Workers

Given rapid advancements in technology, the federal government must be an engaged partner in providing American workers with the tools they need to prepare for the jobs of the future.

However, investments in the training needed to transition workers into these new opportunities are at historic lows. The United States spent less than 0.1 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on active labor market policies in 2021—significantly less than many European countries and less than half of the level of workforce investments made in the United States 30 years ago.

Preparing American workers to take on the jobs of the future will strengthen the middle class and secure America's standing as a global competitor and innovator. A strong investment in our workforce is an investment in our nation's economy.

The *Investing in Tomorrow's Workforce Act*: This legislation increases federal investments in worker training to ensure that the American workforce has the skills needed to successfully navigate the transition into higher-skilled positions and in-demand industries.

- *Invest in Workforce Training.* The bill would create a grant program through the Department of Labor to support industry partnerships in developing and carrying out training programs for workers who are, or are likely to become, dislocated because of advances in technology, including automation.
- *Expand Current Programs.* The bill would increase funding for National Dislocated Worker Grants and amend the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to ensure workers who are dislocated by automation are included in WIOA programs.