



Committee: House Education & Workforce Committee

Event: [Building an AI-Ready America: How AI is Creating Opportunities Across America's Workforce](#)

Date: July 24, 2026

Executive Summary:

On July 24, 2026, the House Education & Workforce Committee held a field hearing to discuss how artificial intelligence (AI) can strengthen the domestic economy, reshore critical supply chains, and improve productivity in sectors like agriculture and healthcare. While bipartisan agreement emerged concerning AI's potential to enhance U.S. competitiveness, Democrats expressed concern regarding the need for worker protections and the severe strain that AI data centers place on local communities and energy infrastructure.

Member Toplines¹:

[Rep. Rick Allen \(R-GA-12\)](#): Allen emphasized the potential of AI to drive economic growth, improve worker productivity, and strengthen America's competitiveness across critical industries. He urged Congress to pursue policies that encourage the responsible adoption of AI while avoiding overregulations that could hinder innovation or limit businesses' ability to implement AI most effectively. Allen also stressed the importance of investing in workforce development and essential infrastructure to ensure the U.S. remains a global leader in AI as international competition intensifies.

[Rep. Lucy McBath \(D-GA-06\)](#): McBath argued that while AI has the potential to improve opportunity and benefit workers, its adoption must be accompanied by strong safeguards to protect employees, communities, and consumers. She warned that unchecked AI deployment could infringe upon workers' privacy through surveillance, enable discrimination, and retaliate against workers who are unionizing. She also expressed concern about the local impacts of expanding AI infrastructure, particularly rapid data center development and the resulting displacement of communities. McBath emphasized that workers, labor organizations, and local communities should play a central role in shaping AI implementation, and she defended the ability of states and localities to establish AI regulations.

Roundtable Attendees:

[Ajikumar Parayil, Founder & CEO, Manus Bio](#): Parayil highlighted how AI can strengthen U.S. manufacturing, create high-quality jobs, and reduce reliance on foreign supply chains like China and India. He argued that AI is accelerating innovation by improving manufacturing efficiency, product development, quality control, and supply chain resilience, positioning the U.S. to compete globally. Parayil framed continued investment in AI-enabled manufacturing as

¹ An opening statement for Rep. McBath was not available online at the time of this readout's distribution.

essential to expanding economic opportunity, reinforcing domestic production, and maintaining America's technological leadership.

[Brad Edenfield, Farmer & General Manager, RT Farms Inc.:](#) Edenfield emphasized that although AI has the potential to transform agriculture by improving efficiency, its success in the agricultural sector will depend on pairing technological innovation with practical expertise. He noted that experienced farmers are essential to interpreting and applying AI-generated insights effectively. Edenfield also stressed the need to develop a new generation of workers with both technical and agricultural knowledge, arguing that expanded education, training, and industry partnerships could attract younger talent and prepare the workforce for AI-enabled farming.

[Tony Barlow, Vice President, Communications Workers of America, Local 3204:](#) Barlow argued that the deployment of AI without adequate safeguards risks displacing workers, degrading job quality, and reducing customer service. He contended that AI-driven monitoring and automated management systems have increased workplace surveillance and the potential for biased or inaccurate evaluations. Barlow emphasized that workers and their unions should have a meaningful role in the development and implementation of AI technologies to ensure they enhance human skills and judgement rather than replace it. He urged Congress to establish federal protections that require human oversight of employment decisions and preserve quality jobs and customer service as AI becomes more widely integrated into the workplace.

[Jeffrey Talbert, Professor & Department Chair in AI & Health, Medical College of Georgia:](#) Talbert argued that AI's greatest value in healthcare is in enhancing the work of healthcare professionals rather than replacing it. He emphasized that AI can help address workforce shortages and clinician burnout by reducing administrative burdens, improving patient outcomes, and enabling earlier disease detection and treatment. Talbert also highlighted AI's role in creating new workforce opportunities related to the implementation, oversight, and management of AI-enabled healthcare systems. He stressed that continued investment in AI education, research, and responsible deployment is essential for strengthening the healthcare workforce and maintaining U.S. leadership in medical innovation.

Major Takeaways:

- Allen asked if the benefits that his company has experienced through the use of AI could be extended to other manufacturing industries.
 - Parayil explained that his company uses AI to analyze years of proprietary data to improve design, engineering, and optimization. He also affirmed that these AI-driven capabilities can be applied broadly across other manufacturing sectors.
- Rep. **Joe Wilson** (R-SC-02) asked how the U.S. can compete with China in AI and advanced manufacturing.
 - Parayil argued that America's competitive advantage lies in rapidly implementing AI across manufacturing operations to improve workforce productivity rather than relying on lower labor costs. He explained that AI can help workers make faster and emphasized that successful adoption depends on workers using AI as a tool to enhance their performance.

- McBath asked why employers should consult workers before adopting AI technologies in the workplace.
 - Barlow argued that workers possess the practical expertise needed to determine whether AI tools will improve or hinder job performance. He contended that involving employees in AI implementation helps ensure technologies are deployed effectively.
- McBath asked whether members of Barlow's union have experienced algorithmic management systems used to evaluate worker performance.
 - Barlow responded that union members have reported AI-driven performance evaluations that can be inaccurate or biased. He argued that these systems can increase workplace stress and reduce job satisfaction when AI-generated assessments are utilized without adequate human oversight.