

The Joint Center on President Trump's Workforce Executive Order and Black Workers

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WASHINGTON, DC – Last week, the White House announced an executive order establishing a “National Council for the American Worker.” The Council will develop a national strategy for training and retraining workers by gathering input from a variety of stakeholders, both public and private.

“At the Joint Center, we are deeply committed to workforce development in Black communities in the changing economy. We welcome any and all conversations to move toward an inclusive system of training, particularly building off the major reforms and funding efforts from the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, which was signed by President Obama in 2014,” said **Spencer Overton, the President of the Joint Center**. **“We hope the new Council will give special attention to communities that have not enjoyed all of the benefits of this economy. We also hope that the President reconsiders previous proposals to cut state job training grants by up to 40 percent, which will disproportionately affect Black communities.”**

Tanya Wallace-Gobern, Executive Director of the National Black Worker Center Project, had this to add to about the White House announcement: “Who gets appointed to this board is key and is concerning, as [President] Trump does not have a history of appointing folks who are advocates for and have knowledge of the issues that face Blacks and the working poor. It is a common practice for businesses to receive incentives to open shop in cities across America. Real investment in the American workforce must include incentives for workers such as free training, priority hiring status given to those who complete training, inclusion of the formerly incarcerated, and accountability measures to ensure equal opportunity in admittance to the trainings and to ensure quality wages are paid.”

Too many Black workers remain disconnected from the labor force, and many who are participating are in occupations at high-risk to automation. The Joint Center’s study found that 27 percent of Black workers are concentrated in just 30 jobs at high-risk to automation, such as cashiers, drivers, and security guards. Upskilling is key to help prepare the community for emerging jobs and occupations that pay higher wages. It is also critical for employers and government to address other well-documented barriers to employment in transitioning labor markets, such as implicit bias in recruitment and evaluation. The Joint Center welcomes proposals and conversations that are local, place-based, community-oriented, and tailored to specific communities to reduce barriers to employment.

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The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, founded in 1970, is a think tank that produces data, analysis, and ideas to solve challenges that confront the African American community. The Joint Center collaborates with top experts, various organizations, and others that value racial inclusion to maximize our impact. We are currently focused on the future of work in African American communities and congressional staff diversity.