STATE OF ARKANSAS
House of Representatives

Newsletter From Rep. Cameron Cooper

District 57

August 22, 2025

Committee Studies Workforce Services

This week, members of the ALC Hospital, Medicaid, and Developmental Disabilities Study Subcommittee received a presentation on a new approach that could reshape how Arkansas delivers both workforce and social services.

During the 2025 Regular Session, the General Assembly passed Act 145, which directs the subcommittee to examine reforms to the state's workforce and social service systems and to recommend legislation addressing any identified gaps.

The committee began its most recent discussion with a sobering overview of the state's current challenges. In the 2023–24 school year, 32,689 Arkansas students earned high school diplomas. At the same time, the state reported 52,681 unemployed workers and an estimated 41,000 underemployed. Employers, meanwhile, struggled to fill positions, with 86,000 job openings in February 2025 and a peak of more than 102,000 in September 2024—one of the highest job-opening rates in the nation. While Arkansas's unemployment rate stands at a relatively low 3.7%, the state's labor force participation rate of 58.4% ranks 43rd nationally.

To address these concerns, the subcommittee heard from WorkED Consulting, a firm that specializes in helping states align workforce development with public assistance programs. The firm highlighted Utah's "one-door" model, which integrates workforce training and social services into a unified system. Testimony noted that this approach streamlines access to federal and state resources, strategically invests in upskilling workers for in-demand industries, and creates cost efficiencies by focusing on the needs of both employers and job seekers.

The subcommittee will reconvene on September 22 to continue its work. The challenges facing Arkansas are significant, but so is the opportunity. By examining innovative solutions, legislators hope to connect more Arkansans with meaningful employment, strengthen families, and build a stronger foundation for the state's economy.