
To: Chair Evans and Members of the House Veterans and Emergency Preparedness Committee

From: Kim Douthit, Program Supervisor, Multnomah County Veterans Services

Date: February 12, 2019

RE: HB 2551

Chair Evans and Members of the House Veterans and Emergency Preparedness Committee,

I respectfully submit the following written testimony in support of HB 2551 which proposes programs to increase opportunities for veterans in construction and construction materials industries.

As someone who has worked with disabled veteran and student veteran populations for the last seven years, I was pleased to read a bill that supports job and business development opportunities for veterans pursuing work in the trades. I've met with a number of recently discharged veterans who want to go to work in their communities but have trouble finding meaningful work that pays a decent wage. Veterans frequently express an interest in the trades since that type of work tends to align with their military job experience. They often don't know how to get started in the trades post-service, however, since many tradespersons begin working in trades after high school -- when veterans are instead choosing to serve their country.

While the creation of the grant programs proposed by this bill will offer opportunities for training, business development, and employment to veterans wishing to pursue work in the construction industry, I suggest making some amendments that could better ensure these new programs are equitably accessible by all veteran demographics.

U.S. Department of Labor statistics confirm that the construction industry is predominantly dominated by white men (<https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat18.htm>) but our veteran population is very diverse. Women veterans, LGBTQ veterans, and veterans of color should have the same opportunities to access employment resources for veterans as their white male counterparts. I request the committee add provisions to this bill that direct the Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs to include equity measures in deciding how grants are awarded, such as preference for disabled-veteran owned or operated programs, women-veteran owned businesses or programs, etc. Specifically, I recommend including language in section (4) (a) which adds preference for women or minority owned/operated programs or programs that favor women or minority candidates. In addition, I recommend amending section (4) (b) to include preference for candidates from non-dominant demographics who apply for assistance from the resulting pilot

programs. These additions will encourage more diversity among program offerings and offer opportunities that are accessible to a greater number of Oregon veterans.

Thank you for your your time and attention.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kimberly Douthit
Program Supervisor, Multnomah County Veterans Services
USCG Veteran