



## Testimony in Support of HB 4143

Chris Hewitt  
February 5, 2020

Chair Barker and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 4143. My name is Chris Hewitt and I serve as Political Director for the Oregon & Southern Idaho District Council of Laborers (LIUNA). LIUNA members perform highly skilled and physically demanding work in a diverse array of critical settings throughout Oregon's construction industry, including building and maintaining our state's roads, bridges, highways as well as energy infrastructure.

Through prohibiting Oregon taxpayer funds from being utilized to support Industry Recognized Apprenticeship Programs (IRAPs), House Bill 4143 represents an important step toward ensuring the continuing integrity of our state's existing long-standing and highly successful Registered Apprenticeship programs. A recent Presidential Executive Order<sup>1</sup> and subsequent Department of Labor proposed rule<sup>2</sup> would threaten to substantially undermine this system of time-tested training programs currently operating within the construction industry that adhere to a rigorous array of training, educational, safety and oversight standards. The proposed rule seeks to create a new type of apprenticeship model, under which, private employers and trade associations would be afforded broad authority to implement new watered-down standards and to self-certify their own lower quality training programs.

Contrary to our current system, the new IRAP framework would grant private entities the direct ability to implement substandard apprenticeship programs based on vague criteria that is considerably lacking in the vital government oversight regulations in which registered programs must adhere to today, in order to best ensure both work quality and safety. Namely, IRAPs propose loosely defined criteria for recognizing a program, subpar training and performance standards with oversight performed by private entities, no explicit graduation or completion requirements, a lack of uniform recognition of certifications or credentials, no safety training provisions, no wage guarantees and no journeyman-to-apprentice ratio requirements at worksites. Clearly, the introduction of these new programs is all but certain to erode robust industry standards built up over many decades, weaken accountability mechanisms while putting workers' lives at risk and ultimately placing downward pressure on wage standards throughout Oregon and across our country's construction industry.

Many of today's registered construction apprenticeships, on the other hand, have functioned effectively for more than eighty years and are largely subsidized through private funding sources that ensure minimal to no cost for apprentices, including the \$1 billion in total annual investments that programs receive from Building Trades unions and signatory contractors.<sup>3</sup> This includes the Oregon Laborers Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee, which has been registered with BOLI since 1983 and requires 4,000 hours of paid on-the-job training, 360 hours of classroom education, OSHA compliance training, uniform progressive wage increases and a 1-to-1 ratio of apprentices to journey-level workers to ensure a high level of safe, hands-on

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/3245/>. Accessed Feb. 3, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/eta/eta20190624>. Accessed Feb. 3, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Source: North America's Building Trades Unions Research Department – Survey of Building Trades Unions' Training Budgets. 2016.



supervision at each job site.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, these existing programs maintain exceedingly high employee placement and retention rates, with 91% of workers who complete a registered apprenticeship program today still employed nine months later.<sup>5</sup>

Although LiUNA recognizes the underlying need for training additional skilled workers to meet the increasing workforce demand in the construction industry, enacting a competing apprenticeship system with diminished standards is not the solution and would have a hazardous and detrimental effect on our construction sector. By preventing spending of state money on or for the benefit of IRAPs, HB 4143 will ensure that Oregon tax dollars are not invested in inadequate training models that threaten to degrade existing registered apprenticeship programs, which have provided a pathway to family wage jobs and produced many thousands of highly-skilled construction workers for generations across our communities.

The Oregon & Southern Idaho District Council of Laborers urges your support for House Bill 4143.

Thank you,

Chris Hewitt

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<sup>4</sup> Oregon State Apprenticeship and Training Division Standards of Apprenticeship. [https://www.oregon.gov/boli/ATD/docs/Standards/1000/1058\\_0628.0.pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/boli/ATD/docs/Standards/1000/1058_0628.0.pdf). Accessed Feb. 3, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Labor Apprenticeship Toolkit- Frequently Asked Questions. <https://www.dol.gov/apprenticeship/toolkit/toolkitfaq.htm>. Accessed Feb. 3, 2020.