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OPPOSE HB 2649B - NOT THE RIGHT ANSWER FOR APPRENTICESHIP IN OREGON

HB 2649B makes several changes to Oregon’s apprenticeship requirements, putting undue pressure on Oregon’s apprenticeship pipeline. Our organizations strongly support apprenticeship. However, the policy in this bill does not move the needle or bring more apprentices into the pipeline. We instead need to focus on getting more people engaged in construction, including in school programs.

HB 2649B makes several problematic policy changes:

- (1) Increases apprenticeship utilization mandates from 12% to 15%, without any discussion of whether it is even possible to meet that requirement
- (2) Adds all higher education projects over \$3M to the apprenticeship utilization mandates, again without discussion of whether meeting this is possible
- (3) Creates a penalty for contractors who are unable to meet the apprenticeship mandates, even if they have tried everything to meet the requirements
- (4) Removes the ODOT exemption that allows the agency to develop and maintain their own apprenticeship program, which ODOT has done with great success for many years

This bill looks to increase apprenticeship at the wrong end of the pipeline, and penalizes contractors while doing it. While this penalty is supposed to increase funding for apprenticeship programs, there is no framework in place that ensures this funding will go to the areas where contractors aren’t able to get apprentices. It allows no offramps for contractors, and doesn’t actually help increase the number of apprentices where they are most needed. It unfairly penalizes contractors who cannot comply with the law, with no guarantee of helping them achieve the goal in the future.

It also removes the ability for ODOT to account for the special requirements and situations that arise in highway construction. Given the size of these projects and the types of apprentices needed, a one-size-fits-all apprenticeship mandate doesn’t work. ODOT needs the flexibility to use their current program, which has had significant success since its implementation. We shouldn’t abandon a program that’s working.

Apprenticeship is vital for the construction industry throughout Oregon. However, the policy changes in HB 2649B don’t improve apprenticeship in Oregon, or make it more accessible. Rather it makes sweeping changes without necessary stakeholder engagement and without consideration of current apprenticeship realities.

We urge a NO vote on HB 2649B.

