

Submitter: Larry Williams
On Behalf Of: Self
Committee: House Committee On Higher Education and Workforce Development
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3669

Chair Hudson, Vice Chairs Fragala and Harbick, and Members of the Committee,

I have worked for 14 1/2 years administering program that supports applicants to highway construction trades through pre-apprenticeship, improves retention of diverse apprentices by providing supportive services, and is developing a respectful workplace climate scale and training hub. Because this program is funded by transportation dollars, services are limited to apprentices in seven targeted trades: 1) carpenters, 2) cement masons, 3) inside electricians, 4) ironworkers, 5) laborers, 6) operating engineers, and 7) painters. The program has been evaluated to be effective at improving completion rates, and I have posted the most recent report from researchers at Portland State University separately. Particularly effective have been social supports (such as guidance, coaching, and peer support), pre-apprenticeship for women, child care subsidies, and hardship assistance.

There are other programs that have been implemented more recently that cover child care subsidies for apprentices in other construction trades through a partnership between Business Oregon, BOLI, and DELC. There are regionally bound services in the Portland Metropolitan area through a Funders Collaborative organized by METRO and training in clean energy trades from the Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund (PCEF).

There are still gaps, though, in the retention services for apprentices that do not appear to be contemplated in the Expansion of Prosperity 10,000, as drafted. Specifically, there are no hardship services available for apprentices outside the seven targeted construction trades related to roads and bridges. There is limited support for effective pre-apprenticeship classes for women outside of the Portland Metropolitan Area. There are no child care subsidies for apprentices in maintenance trades (in industries like manufacturing and utilities) or for child care and education or for health care, which are all high demand occupations/industries.

It is a positive move to expand from job preparation and placement to career building, such as serving existing workers who are wanting to advance. However, the services currently contemplated do not appear to replicate the successful supportive services programs for registered apprentices from highway construction to other high demand occupations and industries that are not presently eligible for services under the patchwork of programs currently operating in Oregon.