

Co-Chairs Broadman and Evans, and members of the committee,

My name is Anna Martin, and I am a Journeyman Ironworker with Local 29 and the U-PACT Oregon Coordinator. When I was first asked by the Ironworkers Apprenticeship Coordinator to write a grant proposal for a pre-apprenticeship program at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility, I had no idea of the profound impact it would make. I thought I would simply go in, teach the curriculum, provide hands-on training, and help the women find a career upon their release. But since that first day in May of 2023, I've learned that this program is about so much more than skills and job placement—it's about rebuilding confidence, breaking down barriers, and restoring hope.

On the first day of every class, the women walk in quiet, unsure, and hesitant to trust—both in me and in each other. They carry the weight of past mistakes, judgment, and self-doubt. But by the final day, I see a transformation: they are loud with laughter, they see their classmates as teammates, they recognize their own strength, and they are in awe of how much they have learned and retained. They no longer feel like their past defines them; instead, they see a future filled with opportunity.

For me, this work doesn't end at the classroom door. I make it a priority to meet U-PACT Oregon graduates at the gate on the day they are released—not to push them into a union, but to remind them they are not alone. I want them to know that someone is proud of them, that their hard work matters, and that their future is just beginning.

Often, we take fundamental milestones for granted like acquiring a car or securing stable housing. Yet, when a graduate calls me, sharing news such as, "I just got my first car loan," or "I signed a lease for my first apartment," I cannot help but feel an overwhelming sense of pride. Before embarking on this path with U-PACT Oregon, my greatest achievements were purchasing my own home and attaining Journeyman Ironworker status. Now, my greatest source of pride lies in these remarkable women—their courage, resilience, and their willingness to embrace the promise of a better future.

U-PACT Oregon is in urgent need of funding to sustain this life-altering program. The loss of this initiative would not only hinder future participants; it would significantly limit the ability of adults in custody to pursue new lives, leaving them to consider desperate measures to make ends meet. These women deserve a second chance, and this program stands as a testament that when provided the opportunity, they will not only meet the challenge but soar.

Sincerely,

Anna Martin, Journeyman Ironworker
U-PACT Oregon Coordinator & Lead Instructor