

Testimony in Support of HB 3881
Oregon House Committee on Labor and Workplace Standards
March 19, 2025

Chair Grayber, Vice-Chairs Elmer and Muñoz, and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Cassidy Kotter. I am a Government Relations Specialist with the Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA), representing over 25,000 classified education professionals across Oregon who all play a crucial role in keeping Oregon's schools running smoothly. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 3881.

This bill is a critical step toward ensuring that publicly funded school construction projects contribute directly to building a skilled workforce and expanding career opportunities for Oregonians. As classified employees, OSEA members serve as bus drivers, custodians, instructional assistants, food service workers, IT specialists, and maintenance staff—the backbone of our public schools. Many of our members work in facilities that are outdated or in need of significant repairs, and they see the clear impact of school construction projects on their workplaces. Unfortunately, too many of these projects rely on out-of-state contractors and workers, missing an opportunity to invest in local labor and apprenticeship pathways. By adding school districts, education service districts, and public charter schools to the definition of a "qualifying agency" under Oregon's apprenticeship requirements, HB 3881 ensures that school construction projects help train the next generation of skilled workers—right here in Oregon, all while creating long-term, family-wage careers.

The OSEA members who already work in CTE programs in community colleges across Oregon understand the value of creating professional pathways for future tradeworkers. HB 3881 creates more of these pathways through the extension of critical apprenticeship opportunities, and ensures that school construction projects use registered apprentices so that the door to high-wage, in-demand trade positions remains open for young people entering the workforce.

HB 3881 also prioritizes local workers and aims to keep public funds in Oregon by helping ensure that tax dollars earmarked for school construction benefit Oregon workers, not out-of-state contractors. This is especially critical for rural and economically disadvantaged communities, where opportunities for skilled trade apprenticeships can be limited.

Additionally, HB 3881 strengthens the local workforce by supporting fair wages and job stability, and by raising labor standards to ensure high-quality facility craftsmanship for safer schools. Construction apprenticeships have been shown to produce a robust value and strong return on investment for industry employers, increasing productivity and retention. For approximately every dollar invested in registered apprenticeships, on average, employers can see a return of \$1.30 to \$3.00 through improved productivity and reduced turnover. Since apprenticeship requirements raise labor standards, this helps

prevent the use of low-wage, untrained labor in school construction and directly benefits our members who maintain these buildings.

OSEA strongly supports HB 3881 as a meaningful step toward strengthening Oregon's workforce. We urge an aye vote.

Cassidy Kotter

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