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TO: House Committee on Labor and Workplace Standards
FROM: Stacy Michaelson, Director of Government Relations and Communications
DATE: March 21, 2025
RE: HB 3881

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on HB 3881. I write today to share OSBA's concerns regarding the bill.

OSBA believes that students should be encouraged to explore potential careers in the trades and we recognize how critical the trades are to Oregon's economy. Our position on HB 3881 is not a reflection of our policy priorities related to career pathways, but rather our commitment to stretching dollars as far as they can go for students.

Local K-12 schools are not the same as state or higher education capital construction projects. Oregon school districts and ESDs are dependent on local voters to approve bond measures in order to make significant improvements or upgrades to our school buildings. OSBA tracks district bond efforts and since 2020, 41 school bonds have failed and only 33 have passed. Often where districts are successful in passing a bond, there is broad community support, including from industry.

It is an unfortunate reality that the bulk of our construction trade apprenticeships are nearly all located along the I-5 corridor. This is a barrier for Eastern Oregon students and industry partners alike. Our concern is that if HB 3881 passes, many of the local contractors in Eastern Oregon would not be able to bid local school projects. This would have an impact on the local economy and will impact how the local community views district bond measures.

It's one thing to ask a community to support a bond that will support local jobs and businesses, it's another to ask voters to support property tax increases knowing that those jobs will be going to contractors from other parts of the state. That's a harder sell and we are concerned passage of HB 3881 would make it even harder for districts to pass bonds and make necessary upgrades to our school buildings.

We believe that public dollars should be used for the public good. When voters are agreeing to raise their own property taxes to fund improvements in our local buildings, they deserve a level of confidence that those dollars will, to the greatest extent possible, benefit the local economy. This is especially true in more economically depressed areas of our state.

Again, OSBA recognizes the value of apprenticeship programs. We would suggest that the more meaningful step toward expanding our trade workforce would be to invest in additional apprenticeship programs and training centers outside of the I-5 corridor. This

would make it easier for students from all parts of Oregon to pursue a career in the trades and would improve the ability of local contractors to work with apprentices.

In short, we believe the carrot will get us all better results in terms of workforce training and career options rather than the stick that puts restrictions on local districts' options for addressing their facilities needs. Thank you again for the opportunity to weigh in.