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# A STRONG VOICE FOR OREGON'S WORKERS

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May 14, 2025

Chair Bowman, Vice-Chairs Pham and Drazen and members of the House Rules committee,

The Oregon AFL-CIO represents over 300,000 workers across the state in every sector and is a voice for all workers in the legislative process. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of HB 3881 which would ensure that certain K-12 school construction projects utilizing State Treasury funds meet minimum registered apprenticeship employment standards and encourage efforts to recruit historically underrepresented workers in the industry.

State registered construction apprenticeship programs provide high-quality, rigorous “earn while you learn” training through a combination of classroom instruction and hands-on experience and are a proven method for developing the skilled workforce to meet ongoing industry needs. These programs support viable career pathways into the construction industry and family-wage jobs, but there must be commitment on the part of project owners and contractors to connect apprentices with consistent work opportunities in order to obtain the hours required to complete their training and, in turn, advance in their careers.[1]

Across the country, the construction industry is seeing employment growth and apprenticeship program enrollment in Oregon has expanded 62% over the past decade, while construction jobs in our state are projected to increase 13% by 2033. K-12 public school construction project owners have a powerful opportunity to further support this skilled training continuum, by ensuring minimum requirements for work hours that must be performed by apprentices on applicable projects.

However, school construction—today one of the largest and most consistent areas of public works investment throughout our state—has no uniform minimum standards for apprenticeship utilization or workforce participation goals, and this bill would help change that. HB 3881 will align public school construction projects with current statutory requirements that apply to state agencies, public higher-education and community college construction funded by Oregon taxpayers.

HB 3881 does not create a wholly new set of standards that are without precedent. The bill extends the same minimum apprenticeship utilization requirements and workforce recruitment goals that *already apply* for bidders on state agency construction projects, as well as applicable higher-education and community college projects which utilize State Treasury Funds. The bill will help ensure that contractors who bid on public projects are those prioritizing on-the-job apprenticeship training and actively working to cultivate the skilled construction workforce that is crucial for building and maintaining the vital infrastructure throughout our communities, going forward.

Oregon's K-12 public schools are entrusted with a fundamental mission to educate the next generation of our state and prepare students to pursue next steps towards fulfilling careers that enable the foundation for a decent life and stable communities. HB 3881 deepens this mission by requiring our educational institutions to actively support the ongoing training needs of our vital construction workforce, which will benefit workers, businesses, and the economic prosperity of our state broadly.

Having access to living-wage careers is perhaps the most important way workers can build generational wealth. By prioritizing good-faith efforts for the recruitment and retention of people of color, women, and veterans, we can better ensure that public investments in school construction help make Oregon a place where these projects actively improve the lives of those who have historically been underrepresented in the industry. We encourage your support of HB 3881.

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[1] For the Laborers' apprenticeship, apprentices must complete 4000 hours of on-the-job training and 360 hours of related training (including classroom portions) in order to become full journey workers.

<https://oregonlaborers.com/process/>

[2] Milshtein, Amy. "Building the Future". *Oregon Business* (May 3, 2024). <https://oregonbusiness.com/building-the-future/>. Accessed Mar. 10, 2025.

[3] Oregon School Capital Improvement Matching (OSCIM) Program). Oregon Department of Education. <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/schools-and-districts/grants/pages/oscim-program.aspx>. Accessed Mar. 10, 2025.

[4] Clark, Matthew. "A Compelling Case for Construction Craft Training: The Return on Investment is Real". *National Center for Construction Education and Research* (Feb. 7, 2024). <https://www.nccer.org/newsroom/a-compelling-case-for-construction-craft-training-the-return-on-investment-is-real/>

[5] "Benefits of Apprenticeship". *North America's Building Trades Unions* (March 3, 2017). <https://nabtu.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Benefits-of-Apprenticeship.pdf> (Accessed Mar 10, 2025).