

Chair Bowman, Vice Chairs Drazan and Pham and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 3881 with the proposed -2 amendment. My name is Chris Hewitt, Political Director with the Oregon Laborers. LIUNA represents 4,000 members across the state of Oregon who primarily work in the construction industry as Laborers. LIUNA members have worked for many decades on school construction projects, and we have seen the crucial role that these jobs play in the development of a skilled and trained workforce in our state.

Construction employment is expected to increase in the coming years as it is Oregon's 3rd fastest growing industry today¹. To help ensure that we have the skilled tradespeople available and prepared to meet this demand, construction registered apprenticeship enrollment has expanded by 62% over the last decade², as many training programs have vigorously recruited to cultivate the next generation of our workforce pipeline. While a hallmark of many registered construction apprenticeships is the ability to earn a livable wage on day one with no tuition cost, an essential aspect of these programs is the extensive hands-on training in the field that workers are required to complete. HB 3881 with the proposed -2 amendment is a pivotal next step in helping prepare our state to meet this current moment by actively supporting work opportunities for the next generation of apprentices and encouraging equitable access to living-wage construction careers.

First, this bill under the -2 amendment provides that for school district public improvement contracts exceeding \$3 million and receiving state matching funds from the Oregon School Capital Improvement Matching Program, a minimum of 12% of the work hours be performed by registered apprentices beginning in 2026 and moving to 15% in 2027. This aligns the same apprenticeship utilization standards on K-12 projects that already apply to qualifying state agency and public higher education construction projects in Oregon.

The bill also importantly requires that bidders on covered K-12 school construction projects establish plans for good-faith recruitment and retention of historically underrepresented workers in the industry—women, minority individuals and Veterans—with a goal that 15% total project employment consists of workers from one or more of those groups. We know that having access to decent wage careers is vital for workers' ability to build generational wealth and is essential for the health of our economy. By prioritizing intentional recruitment efforts, our school construction investments can help further encourage contractors to identify and attract talent from a wide range of backgrounds and communities and reflect the growing diversity of our state.

In the last eight years, communities across the state have passed approximately 100 bond measures, totaling more than \$8 Billion cumulatively in public school construction and facility improvement.³ Our state has a tremendous opportunity to further support our skilled construction workforce pipeline by aligning these considerable public investments with the minimum training standards and recruitment goals in this bill. Notably, nearby states like

¹ Source: State of Oregon Employment Department, <https://qualityinfo.org/-/oregon-jobs-projected-to-increase-8-by-2033>.

² Source: Bend Bulletin. https://www.bendbulletin.com/business/oregon-construction-jobs-hit-record-high-and-are-poised-to-keep-growing/article_877f2e3c-bec6-11ee-9469-7be7fefa2cd0.html. Accessed Mar. 6, 2025

³ <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/schools-and-districts/grants/pages/oscim-program.aspx#:~:text=Districts%20are%20awarded%20grants%20based,calculated%20using%20the%20Funding%20Formula>.



Washington, California and Nevada all have established minimum apprenticeship utilization laws that align with or otherwise exceed what HB 3881 proposes.

Oregon's K-12 public schools have a fundamental mission to educate the next generation of our state and prepare students for success. We deeply appreciate that many of our schools have brought a renewed emphasis in recent years on promoting trades curriculum and opportunities to learn about career pathways, with eighty-five high schools now offering construction-related Career and Technical Education programs to students. LIUNA and our construction trades partners firmly believe that HB 3881 complements and furthers this educational continuum, by reinforcing that K-12 construction projects actively support meaningful work opportunities and hands-on training for the next generation of skilled trades workers entering this industry, who will be needed and relied upon for building our public school infrastructure in the years to come.

LIUNA urges your support for HB 3881 and the -2 amendment.

Thank you,

Chris Hewitt