
OREGON PLUMBING-HEATING-COOLING CONTRACTORS AND NORTHWEST AUTO TRADES ASSN TESTIMONY SUPPORTING HOUSE BILL 4069

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Chair Harker and Members of the House Higher Education Committee:

My apologies for not appearing in person to discuss an issue of this significance. A trip planned quite a while ago to visit colleges with my son collided with bad weather this weekend and I find myself stuck in San Francisco awaiting a flight that simply won't come soon enough.



The Oregon State Association of Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors (ORPHCC) is a trade association representing both union and open shop contracting businesses in Oregon.

The Northwest Auto Trades Association (NATA) represents mechanical and collision repair shops, auto parts manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers, tow truck operators and auto dismantlers (wrecking yards).

Both ORPHCC and NATA welcome the attention of the Legislative Assembly on the importance of having robust trade-related programs in high schools. Whether it is an auto shop program or classes on woodworking, metals or computers, technological expertise is needed in nearly every field of endeavor. And, for many students and in many programs, a traditional four-year college or university simply is not the best venue for delivering the necessary skills or knowledge to succeed.

High schools need programs to introduce students early to skilled trades opportunities. Community Colleges need classrooms to augment and serve apprenticeship programs. And at every level more instructors are needed to ensure students obtain the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in these highly technical, and often well-compensated vocations.

From high school programs to apprenticeship programs, across the state instructors provide on-the-job as well as classroom training in important fields vital to our future. This includes plumbers, electricians, steelworkers and pipefitters. It also includes service and repair on motor vehicles with their every-more-complex mechanical and computer systems with power sources ranging from compressed natural gas to very dangerous and powerful batteries. As the average age of these trades-men and -women increases -- nearing retirement age in some cases -- it is vital that Oregon invest in ensuring instructors at all levels are available so that the trades remain an important and viable option for post high school training. A school system which permits the gym teacher to also teach auto repair, while prohibiting highly skilled and credentialed master craftsmen from entering the classroom is a system focused more on turf battles than on the needs of students.

In order for these programs to succeed, Oregon must have a strategy to ensure a steady stream of instructors prepared to share their knowledge with the next generation of trades-men and -women. The Task Force envisioned by HB4069 is a vital step in the right direction.

However, on behalf of NATA, we do note the absence of an auto-tech-related member of the Task Force and urge the Committee to consider adding an additional member to the Task Force.

ORPHCC and NATA strongly support House Bill 4069 and urge the Committee to give the bill an unanimous "do pass" recommendation to the full House of Representatives.