

Chairperson Burdick, Vice-Chair Baertschiger, and Committee Members:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony. I am writing in support of SB 455 and what I consider to be related legislation.

I am a Salem resident and I am active in my community. I attend our Salem-Keizer School Board meetings, I volunteer with many community organizations, and I host a radio segment once a month on a community radio station.

I remember a time when iron workers had no outside-of-building protection and when concrete was delivered by men driving go-carts from floor to floor as buildings went up. These workers risked their lives on the job every day. The workers got jobs through male relatives and qualified for work through their unions. This system ensured that the trades were all male and mostly white and that the work was dangerous and transient. It was not until the mid-1970s that there was a stress on education and looking to the future for these workers and their families. Until that time the building and construction trades functioned with a level of anarchy, and the craft unions were the main source of stability in the sector.

Today we admit the folly of unsafe workplaces and unsafe working conditions. We can see--or should see—how terrible segregation is. I hope that we can admit that every worker is entitled to living wages, all the education that they need and can handle, and the hope or promise of a brighter future them and their families.

Here in Salem---and I think that this is true throughout the state---our public schools emphasize career and technical education. For many of our youth this is the only way forward, and I think that this is especially true for the young women and young people of color who enter the CTEC programs. CTEC is part of a bigger picture anchored in youth getting skills, getting into apprenticeship programs, earning living wages, having job security, raising their families here, being part of our communities, and retiring with dignity. The wages earned in the building and construction trades---and the retirement benefits received by private and public workers---circulate quickly through local economies and make other jobs and enterprises possible. Here in Salem funds spent on school construction turn over 7 or 8 times in our local economy.

Taken as a whole, and judged from a community perspective, the legislation put forward by the building and construction trades unions that you are working with helps our youth---and particularly young people of color and young women---by encouraging them to enter CTEC programs, qualify for apprenticeship programs, and get and keep employment here in Oregon.

Communities want a seamless process which moves our youth forward without discrimination. Full funding for education, real community labor agreements that uplift workers, strong prevailing wage laws and enforcement, full funding for BOLI, full funding for LERC, breaking past patterns of discrimination and unsafe work practices, and leadership shown by the state in making work available on public projects for qualified workers and apprentices looks like a complete package to our communities. Let's not fail our youth by putting up a wall that denies them their place in the sun.

I urge you to move forward with SB 455.

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