



OREGON STATE BUILDING &
CONSTRUCTION TRADES COUNCIL

February 4, 2020

VIA EMAIL

Chair Jeff Barker
Vice-Chair Greg Barreto
Vice-Chair Janelle Bynum
House Committee on Business and Labor

Re: HB 4143 – Prohibits spending moneys of State of Oregon or of public body on or for the benefit of Industry Recognized Apprenticeship Programs, known as IRAPs

Dear Chair Barker, Vice-Chair Barreto, Vice-Chair Bynum and Members of the Committee,

My name is Robert Camarillo. I am with the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council, an umbrella organization representing 30 member unions. I am the Executive Secretary of the organization. On behalf of the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council, and the more than 40,000 building and construction trades workers represented, I urge you to please support HB 4143 to help keep industry recognized apprenticeship programs out of Oregon, and the building and construction industry. This new proposal by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) will put the future of the skilled trades in Oregon and the foundation of the building and construction industry at risk.

Industry Recognized Apprenticeship Programs or IRAPs in the construction industry pose a major threat to the states registered apprenticeship system, and will drive down quality and training standards across the building and construction industry. IRAPs are guaranteed to set off a race to the bottom putting all Americans at risk. Putting private organizations, such as employers and trade associations, in charge and giving free rein to them to create new watered-down standards and certify new sub-par apprenticeship programs is reckless and hazardous. These new programs would cut down safety and quality standards, have little to no accountability, and bring down wage standards across the state and the country in the building and construction industry.

While we recognize the need to continue to recruit, organize and train more workers for the construction industry as our workforce ages, and applaud the government's interest in expanding apprenticeship opportunities; IRAPs have no place in the building and construction industry. In Oregon, the skilled trades have invested hundreds of millions of dollars into recruiting and training a diverse and highly skilled workforce. According to the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries, the number of people in Oregon's state-registered apprenticeship programs has more than doubled in the past six years, there are now more than 10,000 apprentices enrolled. In addition, the number of women and people of color has also more than doubled since 2013.

Registered apprenticeship programs help to recruit, train and retain workers through progressive wage increases; apprentice-to-journey worker ratios that promote safety; uniform training standards; mandatory safety training; and quality assurance assessments from the government. Unfortunately, the proposed IRAP regulations would remove the important protections of the registered apprentice model and give private employers free reign to implement whatever cost-cutting, low quality programs they see fit.

State registered building and construction trades apprenticeship programs are the gold-standard in both the quality of construction and worker safety. Construction is one of the most dangerous and physically demanding industries where workers are often exposed to extreme conditions and heavy equipment. To protect our workers, registered skilled trades apprenticeship programs emphasize safety and high-quality training to prevent accidents. Lower safety standards also place the public at risk. Having our buildings and infrastructure built by untrained and unsafe workers is a danger to our communities and our industry across the state and the country. Having safe buildings and infrastructure is vital to our state and communities where workers reside and are needed.

For over 80 years, registered skilled trades apprenticeship programs have set the bar for high quality training, strong oversight, accountability and good family-sustaining, middle class jobs. Anything less than our time-tested apprenticeship programs, especially an untested program with low quality standards will not only put workers lives at risk, but also our families and our first responders as well.

Sincerely,



Robert Camarillo