
NORTHWEST AUTO TRADES ASSOCIATION TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 1545

Senate Labor & Business Committee / February 3, 2022

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Chair Taylor and Members of the Committee:

The Northwest Automobile Trades Association (NATA) represents more than 450 business members across Oregon. NATA members include collision and mechanical repairs shops, dismantlers, and auto parts manufacturers and distributors.

The Northwest Auto Trades Association applauds the goal of Senate Bill 1545. However, as you know, the bill limits the scope of the available training focus to construction, health care and manufacturing.

SECTION 3. Local workforce development boards.

(1) There is created in the Higher Education Coordinating Commission a program to make grants to local workforce development boards to provide increased access for priority populations to services and benefits available through workforce programs and to provide priority populations with training opportunities in **construction, health care and manufacturing.**

We do not oppose any of these three areas of focus. And we do not oppose narrowly focusing the program. However, that being said, we ask you to consider expanding the program to include “service and repair of motor vehicles”.

The Coronavirus pandemic has taught us many lessons. One of them is that supply chains matter. Transportation matters. And having well-trained technicians who can service and repair motor vehicles – from fire trucks to school buses, from tractor-trailers to farm trucks, from battery-electric cars to mom’s minivan, and from Tri-Met buses to delivery vehicles – our families, our communities, our economy, and our country rely on transportation.

A December 6, 2021, story in Hagerty Media suggests, “[t]his uneven labor trade-off has driven a shortage of somewhere between 10,000 to 20,000 technicians every year, by most estimates. Concerning the shortage over the next five years, estimates ranges wildly on the body count needed: anywhere between 25,000 and 642,000” (*Why is the automotive repair industry in need of so much repair itself?*).

The article goes on to note, “[s]hop classes at the middle and high school level have been the victims of budget cuts for decades, in part due to the required resource investment. Meanwhile, the prevailing message to students from high school staff has prioritized pursuit of academic-focused four-year colleges degrees over trades.”

Motor vehicle repair technicians are needed in every corner of Oregon. There are family-wage jobs in small, rural communities, and in every large city. Please consider adopting an amendment to include the auto service and repair industry to Senate Bill 1545. I am happy to answer any questions.

Thank you.