

February 3, 2022

To All Regarding This Matter: "Senate Bill 1545"

These recommendations are in reference to Senate Bill 1545, Sections #7 and #8

We highly recognize and commend the work of Governor Brown and the 2022 Legislative Assembly for working to allocate funding towards development of the construction workforce. We also recognize with lessons learned over the past 10 years, it is just as important to put forth funding to retain apprentices who are currently in training, working to become our construction workforce of the future.

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) through The Bureau of Labor & Industries (BOLI) has existing programs that have demonstrated and been documented by third party evaluators to be successful in recruitment, retention and completion of apprentices within the highway construction trades. These programs have provided direct support services to assist in retaining apprentices to their apprenticeship trades training and most importantly, their jobs. The Support Services Program provides basic things like tools, boots, raingear, assistance with travel costs and child care costs. There is also work being done to change the ongoing issues of construction culture with respectful workplace practices. All of this work is critical to the retention and completion of apprentices in our construction workforce.

My comments and recommendations pertain to Sections 7 and 8 of SB 1545 (as introduced) and are based on my experience as a project manager on a contract under the ODOT Highway Construction Workforce Development Program, which is authorized by ORS 184.866 and managed by the Apprenticeship and Training Division at the Bureau of Labor and Industries.

Sections 7 and 8 of SB 1545

At a minimum, the bill should be revised to either strike or modify the word "new" on page 5 in line 2, particularly as it relates to the construction industry, because virtually every recognized construction trade is already served in every county of the state by at least one program. For construction, then, limiting services to only "new" programs would be investing in duplication and redundancy rather than building on the documented success of existing programs.

Beyond that minimum, there are some other changes to Sections 7 and 8 to strengthen the design and improve integration with the existing systems. My preferred language would be something like this:

The Oregon Apprenticeship and Training Council, in coordination with the Bureau of Labor and Industries, shall establish and administer a grant program to provide financial support in the construction, manufacturing, and health care industries for services that

- (a) meet the needs of priority populations in pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship, including outreach, recruitment and retention;

- (b) fulfill pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship requirements under the "Equal Employment Opportunity in Apprenticeship" requirements enacted in federal regulations at 29CFR30 and in Oregon rules at OAR 839-011-0200; and
- (c) leverage and coordinate with services provided by ODOT under ORS 184.866.

Currently services under ORS 184.866 are limited to specific construction trades that are commonly employed for "horizontal" construction (e.g., roads, highways, and bridges). So, apprentices who are cement masons can currently get child care subsidies, because they do work (e.g., sidewalks, curbs, and gutters) related to transportation, while their sisters and brothers in the brick mason trades do not currently qualify, because they mostly do "vertical" work (e.g., constructing buildings) and Federal Highway Administration dollars couldn't be used to provide those services.

I estimate it would cost \$5.8 million per biennium to duplicate the services (pre-apprenticeship, job readiness, transportation, child care, hardship assistance, respectful workplace policies and practices) under ORS 184.866 to the remaining construction trades (focused more on vertical construction) based on the average cost per registered apprentice in those trades, which is approximately \$870 per apprentice. See slide 21 of this PowerPoint presented to the Child Care Task force for the detailed numbers: <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2019I1/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/229160>

If we add current manufacturing and health care apprentices, that would add another approximately \$800,000 per biennium based on serving already approved programs for pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship.

Taken together, I would recommend carving out \$6.5 million of the \$20 million listed in Section 8 should be dedicated to replicate and expand the services currently offered by ODOT under ORS 184.866 to priority populations in the targeted industries (construction, manufacturing, and health care) that are not eligible under highway funds.

Let me turn to the question of why this portion of the funds should be expended to replicate and expand this existing program. The bottom line is that the services, where they are available, work to increase diversity in the highway construction trades. This has been documented through third-party evaluations by researchers at Portland State University, which is referenced in the most recent ODOT report to the legislature: <https://www.oregon.gov/odot/About/GR/Highway%20Construction%20Workforce%20Development%20Report.pdf>

My own experience as boots on the ground of providing these services can add dimensions and richness to the data, so indulge me a moment to tell you about some of our customers and how we have been able to improve their lives and opportunities in the trades...

Carlos & Maria; This family qualified for the Support Services Child Care Assistance Program starting in October 2019 and he became a Journey Carpenter as of March 2021. Because of their circumstances they needed 2 separate child care providers and assistance with at least one of them. They received 25% paid of both child care services in this program.

At the start of the program statement “If I receive this assistance, I will be able to work more successfully without stressing that I can’t meet my monthly payments. Thank you in advance for this help.”

At the end of the program statement, “ This support helped me be successful by giving me the peace of mind that my kids were in good hands while I was working. It also helped with the stress about whether I could afford this child care or not. Thank you for all this help.”

Terrance & Joni; This family qualified for a percentage of their child care paid by the Support Services Child Care Assistance Program starting in 2019. They started with 50% paid and went to 25% paid. He became a Journey Carpenter as of January 2022.

At the start of the program statement “My daughter has a congenital heart defect and autism. She has had multiple surgeries with more to come. There is an intense level of stress and insecurity underlying in our daily lives. The assistance with child care costs would bring an extraordinary amount of relief to us. I could attend my training without the stress of being short for rent or other bills.”

At the end of the program statement, “ We were able to save up our money and just bought our first home a little over a year ago now and the child care support allowance has been extremely helpful on allowing us to start a savings, pay our mortgage and get caught up on our bills. Thank you so much for helping me stay in my training and my family to get ahead of all the stressful aspects of our lives.”

Finally, I would like you to think about when you started in your position. When you showed up at your new job, someone showed you to your new office. Upon entering your new office, you found it to be completely empty. Then you were told that you are “required” to bring all of the tools, equipment, furniture, etc. to get your position operational and start working.

While you might think this is an exaggeration, this is how many individuals feel when they are “required” to show up on a jobsite without the basic tools and proper PPE they need to do their job. This is exceptionally challenging for folks from disadvantaged communities, especially those who have cultural barriers and/or language barriers they are trying to overcome in the first place.

Thank you for your attention regarding this matter. Please let me know if you have questions or would like more information.

Respectfully,

Penny Painter
Project Manager

[Akana](#)

6400 SE Lake Road, Suite 270
Portland, OR 97222

Desk: 503.205.4769

Cell: 503.278.6519

Email: Penny.Painter@akana.us

Akana
6400 SE Lake Road, Suite 270
Portland, OR 97222
akana.us