



February 5, 2024

Representative Holvey, Chair
House Committee on Business and Labor
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for HB 4006

Chair Holvey, Vice-Chairs Sosa and Elmer, and Members of the Committee:

The Ironworkers Local 29 represents more than 1,400 journey-level workers and 300 registered apprentices across Oregon and Southwest Washington. Our registered apprenticeship program has existed for more than 100 years and consists of at least 6,400 hours of on-the-job training and 800 hours of classroom instruction.

The Ironworkers Local 29 are supportive of HB 4118 as there is always room to improve coordination across the state when it comes to the pathway from classroom to career. However, we have some concerns that we would like to highlight regarding Building Trade Unions apprenticeships.

First, Building Trade Unions apprenticeships only bring in new apprentices when there is a need and forecasted work for apprentices. Currently, we have a waitlist of hundreds of qualified folks to get into our apprenticeship which is due to the BOLI requirements to provide “reasonably continuous employment” to apprentices in our respective programs. If you want to promote more high school to apprenticeship pathways, a focus on expanding labor standards on projects in Oregon and the inclusion of local hire requirements will create more opportunities for registered apprenticeships to expand.

Second, we are concerned with a potential move away from the “earn as you learn” model that has been implemented so successfully in our program. On the job training is an incredibly important part of a registered Building Trade Union apprenticeship—our apprentices are paid for this work, and we are not sure how compensation would work for high school level students. Our apprenticeship program is standardized across the country and has strict guidelines for completion. We set the bar for programs across the nation and would not want those standards weakened in any manner.

The requirements of the study include many components that we agree with and a review of best practices from across the country could provide benefits to the state and Oregonians. Our understanding is that after BOLI completes the study, Representative Sosa will convene interested stakeholders to work on a concept for the 2025 Legislative Session specific to Oregon based on the best practices identified. For the Ironworkers, we would ask that members of the Building Trade Unions be involved in discussions around policy that affects registered apprenticeship programs and look forward to participating in that future conversation.

Thank you,

Lorne Bulling
Political Coordinator, Ironworkers Local 29