



COLORADO BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION TRADES COUNCIL, AFL-CIO

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Mr. Chairman and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. My Name is Jason Wardrip. I am a Colorado native living in Aurora. I am the Business Manager of the Colorado Building & Construction Trades Council. Prior to this position, I was a Business Representative for SMART #9 for ten years and have been a sheet metal worker for 24 years. I work for 24 unions with 14 different crafts and more than 10,000 members. Our members are construction workers working in residential, light commercial, commercial, industrial and the power industries. My role is to support the local unions in the State of Colorado for Per-Apprenticeships, Apprenticeship Standards, and Project Procurement.

We've developed apprenticeships to give people pathways to become construction professionals. Our apprenticeships recruit transitioning military with the Helmets to Hardhats program, adults changing careers and technical schools. We have pre-apprenticeship programs for high school students and underserved populations. We are also developing re-entry programs for pre-release offenders in conjunction with the Colorado Department of Corrections.

The construction industry in Colorado is changing. Renewables are replacing coal at an amazingly fast pace, and this is causing ripple effects through the construction industry. I never imagined as a young sheet metal worker that I'd care about the economics and labor dynamics related to coal, gas, or renewables. However, my livelihood, and the livelihood of our members depends upon us understanding and adapting to a rapidly shifting market.

I'm pleased to testify to you today that I see great opportunity for our industry in the new energy economy. As the desire to reduce carbon emissions escalates, our Union members will answer the call to retrofit older technology and build the infrastructure of the future. There's a lot of work to be done to create and modify our built spaces to be comfortable, efficient, and sustainable.

Our Union members are highly skilled professionals. We get the job done right the first time. Our Union workers work efficiently and bring creative solutions to the table because we've been properly trained as on-the-job apprentices. Academic studies have proven that Union labor returns the biggest bang-for-the-buck. We are economic drivers for Colorado's economy. Our workers have health care and retire with dignity. We take pride in protecting each other's safety, reducing costly injuries, and deaths.

However, in our changing energy market, we are looking to adapt to big changes. The renewable energy market frequently brings in construction workers from out of state at lower wages with little to no benefit packages. We understand independent power producers run a tight budget. However, I know in-state Union

contractors can do the job better than out-of-state labor. We can show dollar-for-dollar how we finish renewable projects on time and under budget, using local workers first.

As these projects become larger, local hire will keep jobs in communities, particularly those losing coal jobs. Local workers maintain the economies they live in by purchasing goods and services, paying taxes, and owning homes in their communities. When out of state workers are brought in, local economies suffer because the wages leave with the workers when the project is finished.

To keep our jobs local and high quality, Colorado passed policies last year to ensure proper licensing in solar installation and enacted best value processes for new energy generating projects. Starting in 2020, Colorado will require solar farms that are larger than 300 Kilowatts to employ workers who are licensed journeymen or in a registered apprenticeship program.

Unions also worked with environmental groups to create the Just Transition Office for coal dependent communities and workers.

The new energy economy can provide high-quality jobs for all trades. We train people to be safe and efficient in our apprenticeships. I ask you, committee members, to look to our new standards in Colorado as a solid start to create good jobs in a zero-carbon economy.

Respectfully submitted,



Jason L. Wardrip