



# Statement for the Record for Associated Builders and Contractors

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*Testimony of*  
G. David Sload

*Before the*  
The U.S. House Committee on Appropriations  
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
Subcommittee

*On*  
“Pipeline to the Workforce”

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April 25, 2018

Chairman Cole, Ranking Member DeLauro and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to be with you today to discuss the important topics of workforce development and my perspective on the pipeline to the workforce. My name is David Sload, and I am the president and CEO of Associated Builders and Contractors, Keystone Chapter.

ABC is a national construction industry trade association representing more than 21,000 members. ABC and its 70 chapters help members develop people, win work and deliver that work safely, ethically and profitably for the betterment of the communities in which ABC and its members work.

ABC members build our communities—from schools and hospitals to highways, military installations, industrial facilities, skyscrapers, professional sports venues and the playground down the street. They build the structures we use to work, play, heal and learn.

ABC and its member companies have the highest commitment to educating and training a workforce that is safe, productive and efficient. Annually, ABC and its members spend \$1.1 billion educating, training and retraining our workforce. I am proud to help Pennsylvanians grow their talents and pursue successful, lucrative and fulfilling careers in construction.

I am living proof of the fulfilling career paths that the construction industry provides. In 1978, I started working as an architectural draftsman for a design/build firm, and I eventually rose to become vice president of a construction management firm. In 2011, I became the director of education and training at ABC Keystone, and in 2017 I was appointed president and CEO. I have 39 years of experience in workforce development and administering and implementing apprenticeship programs. I hope that my experience can be useful in the effort to give more Americans the opportunity to build successful careers in this industry.

Today's hearing focuses on a topic that is of paramount importance not just to the construction industry, but the entire American economy. In order to remain the greatest nation on earth, we must equip our workforce with the skills necessary to compete in the modern economy.

The skills gap is real: right now, there are approximately 500,000 open skilled construction jobs. With steady growth and the possibility of a large infrastructure package, our industry will need one million new workers by 2020. Without a pipeline for both young and older Americans to enter the construction workforce, our industry will struggle to build the infrastructure necessary for our daily routines.

Despite these concerning statistics, the construction industry is adapting and innovating new methods to give all Americans the opportunity to build our great country. At the ABC Keystone Chapter, we have trained generations of workers since 1968. Currently, we offer programs in carpentry, electrical, plumbing, HVAC, sheet metal, heavy equipment and craft laborer. Our 31,000-square-foot facility is state of the art, and we work to ensure that our students are receiving training in the skills that are most in demand in the labor market. We offer programs that are registered with the Department of Labor, and we also offer programs that use industry-recognized curricula developed by NCCER. We have 331 students enrolled in the 2017/2018 year, and we average 60 graduates per year.

NCCER's industry-recognized curricula are particularly important to our pre-apprenticeship programs, which help create a pipeline of construction workers. ABC Keystone partners with high schools to introduce students to the world of construction and teach them basic safety and craft skills. Pre-apprenticeships help open students' eyes to the world outside of a typical four-year degree. Many high schoolers unfortunately feel that they have somehow failed if they decide to follow a career path working with their hands, but our programs are designed to break down those mental barriers and help students and parents understand that the skilled trades offer fulfilling and lucrative careers.

In our pre-apprenticeship program we also provide students with safety training, including OSHA 10, first aid and CPR. Safety is the most important priority in construction, and the ability to instill a culture of safety early in the training process is critical to reaching a zero-incident jobsite. Our pre-apprenticeships have other benefits, as students can matriculate into our program and skip one full year of classroom time, saving the student and employer money. Through the Career Technology Centers we partner with, we are reaching 21 school districts in a five-county

area.

Reaching kids at a young age is extremely important: last year we started a program to highlight the construction industry to middle-school students. To date, we have had 600 students safely participating in hands-on projects in our facility.

Pre-apprenticeships are also a key component in our work helping formerly incarcerated people find a meaningful career in construction. ABC Keystone is in the process of launching a second-chance program that is designed for formerly incarcerated and under-employed people. When someone decides to enroll in our apprenticeship program, the possibilities are endless. Many enrollees work on a jobsite during the day then come to ABC to learn a new craft. ABC member companies know the value of continuing education and providing opportunities for workers to earn stackable, portable credentials. The folks enrolled in our programs know that one day they can own their own business if they choose to follow that path.

After completion of our program, graduates have the opportunity to continue their training with a variety of safety, leadership and journey person upgrade training programs. I am proud to tell you that all our graduates earn 32 credits towards an associate's degree at Harrisburg Area Community College (HACC), one of three community colleges ABC Keystone partners with. I'd like to tell you about a young man who started as a plumbing laborer more than 15 years ago. He entered the plumbing apprenticeship program, and after completing it went directly to HACC, utilizing his 32 credits. Today, after spending 10 years as a plumber, he has his master's degree and is a full time instructor at a post-secondary trade school. This is just one example of the many career paths that start with an apprenticeship program.

Our partnership with community colleges works both ways: students from their trade programs can matriculate into our apprenticeship programs and can bypass up to two years of classroom time.

Apprenticeship programs are the foundation for opportunities that can lead to many destinations in the construction industry. The number of company owners and senior executives

who started as a laborer and advanced their careers through an apprenticeship program truly shows that the American dream can be achieved.

To provide more Americans with the opportunity to access meaningful career paths and to help fill the skills gap, I encourage you, as lawmakers, to support apprenticeship programs. This includes industry-recognized programs as well as those registered with the Department of Labor. The construction industry is a leader in workforce development, and we welcome other industries to look to us for inspiration. When we work together to support careers in the skilled trades we are giving all Americans the opportunity to build a successful future.