

Thank you, Congressman Crow, for the time to speak to you about the Operating Engineers Union in Arapahoe County. My Name is Garry Edmondson.

I am a 37-year member of the international union of operating engineers and am a Training Coordinator for our apprenticeship program. I have spent my career in the construction trade. My time was spent operating dirt equipment, learning to be a mechanic and obtaining welding certifications. I went on to attain multiple crane certifications. I worked to become a certified crane tester and have had the opportunity to serve on a national board representing a certification program for crane operators for 10 years. Nineteen years ago, I took the opportunity to become an instructor and an administrator with the Operating Engineers Local 101 apprenticeship program in Kansas City. I served for 14 years before transitioning to my new opportunity in Colorado. My experience in heavy equipment operation, crane training, welding, and diesel mechanics has given me the unique ability to increase the learning experiences for the apprentices who come into our union's apprentice program.

I have been the administrator for the Colorado apprenticeship at the Operating Engineers Local 9 for almost 5 years. The Apprenticeship program is registered with the United States Department of Labor, and we are a earn-as-you-learn program. We have been teaching apprentices and journeyman for 65 years in Colorado. We have 160 acres and \$3 million worth of equipment dedicated to the hands-on training and development of union apprentices. Our apprenticeship is governed by a committee with equal representation from management and the union. As a Department of Labor registered apprenticeship, we are held to a dedicated set of standards that apply to all apprentices equally. The program is designed so that apprentices complete their training and on-the-job hours in 3 years. As a joint apprenticeship, we rely on our signatory contractors to provide the real-life working experience and a competitive wage in addition to the required training hours that are obtained at our training site.

The demand for apprentices has grown over the last 5 years. For years the interest in trades was overshadowed by the push for high school graduates to transition directly into a University or College environment. This created a shortage of individuals who enter into skilled trades. Trades no longer became an option for students. The benefits of apprenticeships were left unknown to a new generation, thus creating a shortage of individuals coming into the trades. We now have an opportunity to change that direction. Pathways from high school are critical to continuing to provide growth in apprenticeship programs and trade businesses.

One program that we're having success with is the **Multi-Craft Core Curriculum (MC3) Apprenticeship Readiness Program developed by the North American Building Trades Unions (NABTU)**. The apprenticeship program has been working with the MC3 curriculum participants for the last 3 years. Throughout the year, we have students who are a part of the MC3 program that have a chance to try the equipment, to learn about the construction industry and to get a feel for trades in general. Just this week, we enrolled 2 recent graduates from schools that participated in the MC3 program. They had the opportunity to be at the training site and understand what it means to be in an apprenticeship. The MC3 program creates a great pathway that introduces students to the skilled trades.

Industry recognized apprenticeship programs or IRAP's are not the answer to raising awareness about apprenticeship programs. The answer is the expansion of programs like the MC3 along with the Job Corps, both of which we rely on for incoming pre-apprentices. These programs ensure that apprenticeships like mine, who for 65 years have worked closely with contractors to meet industry needs can continue to grow and develop apprentices. Many of our contractors are small businesses, with less than 25 employees. We need to have access to the next generation that are dedicated to growing a career in the Skilled Trades. My Apprenticeship program gives an 18-year-old student a chance at a lucrative career without incurring college debt or student loans. It gives them a choice and opportunity to learn a skilled trade that will never go away, this is done with tried and true standards that are approved by the US Department of labor. Any policies developed or enacted for apprenticeships need to include being a registered apprentice program with defined training standards. It is these standards that will allow an apprenticeship pathway to be successful for future generations.

Thank you for your time.