

## **“Growing Jobs through Infrastructure Investment” Hearing Testimony**

### **Eddie Bustamante, LIUNA Local 720**

Dear members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I am Eddie Bustamante, a member of the Laborers International Union of North America Local 720. I serve in the capacity of Political Director for my local which is a Colorado Statewide Local. We represent Construction Craft Laborers across the state. It’s an honor to testify in a hearing titled “Growing Jobs through Infrastructure Investment”.

Our Laborers work in many sectors of work within the construction industry, such as, Heavy – Highway Construction, Commercial Building, Pipeline and Tunneling, Precast Plants, Traffic Control, and Clean Energy infrastructure. We take great pride in ensuring our members have access to high quality training through our registered apprenticeship program and state of the art training facility. Our Trade became an apprenticeable trade in 1993 and we have worked to create a solid pipeline of workers into the industry ever since. Apprenticeship programs are “earn while you Learn” model programs meaning workers receive on the job training while employed by a contractor while also receiving in class training to further their knowledge. Its important to highlight that through our apprenticeship program, we train for industry and not just for one job or contractor. Within our training, members obtain State & U.S. recognized and approved certifications such as OSHA 10 and OSHA 30, All terrain forklift certification, First AID/CPR, Hazardous Waste, Hoisting and rigging, and Work zone Safety Colorado Department of Transportation certifications. These are a few among many other training courses available to our members that extend from General Construction training, concrete, and safety training.

We know that our country faces a shortage of workers and the goal of the current administration is to create good union jobs through this infrastructure investment. Therefore, creating a pipeline of workers is incredibly important. A key component to this is ensuring we set a high standard for training as we talk about workforce development. For example, our apprenticeship programs are approved and registered through the U.S. Department of Labor, holding us to the highest standard of training. These standards should be set across the industry to help prevent short cuts for contractors or contractor associations to create their own apprenticeship programs without oversight from the US DOL. A solid workforce development plan begins with high training standards.

Here on the ground, we have ongoing efforts to reach our youth and our underserved communities to educate them on the value of a career in the construction industry. We consistently attend job and career fairs in the community and in schools.

From a policy standpoint, we must also ensure high quality, and meaningful labor standards that promote family sustaining wages, employer paid benefits, jobsite safety, local area hiring, and apprenticeship utilization standards. The communities in which this infrastructure is built deserve the opportunity to work on these projects in an equitable fashion.

Our LIUNA Local 720 members earn great wages and employer paid benefits which include a healthcare plan classified as a platinum plan under the Affordable Care Act, lifetime pension benefit, education and training. We believe these things are key to a solid career in construction. If these standards are set across the industry, I believe there would be a natural progression of workers, young and old to want to start a construction career thus helping fill the voids of worker shortages.