



House Labor & Industry Committee

Public Hearing on Apprenticeships.
Comments on HB 1746, HB 2041, and HB 1840.

Testimony of Robert Smith
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Mr. Chairman, Chairman Harkins and respected committee members ,... on behalf of the Eastern Atlantic States Regional Council of Carpenters, I would like to extend our appreciation and thank you for your ongoing courtesies in allowing us to provide input on the issues that come before the committee.

My name is Rob Smith and I am Supervisor of Instruction for the Carpenters Union's Joint Apprentice Training Programs. Our geographic jurisdiction includes not only the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, my home state, but also New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, the District of Columbia, Virginia, West Virginia and North Carolina. In Pennsylvania alone, we currently have approx. 3,000 apprentices enrolled in Registered Apprenticeship Programs in trades of Carpentry, Cabinetmaking, Floor laying, Mill wright, and Piledriving. These students attend one of our five training facilities located in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Allentown, Lebanon Valley, and Duncansville. Nationally, there are 62,000 registered Apprentices affiliated with the United Brotherhood of Carpenters Training Programs. For over 60 years, apprentice training and career development is something that UBC takes very seriously as an organization. I am humbled to be before this committee to express our views on the pending legislation.

Mr. Chairman, we believe that the Registered Apprenticeship model is the best form of job readiness training that exists today. Our Apprentices earn family sustaining wages, excellent medical coverage and retirement benefits all while they learn and hone their trade practice. Those who successfully complete our programs do so with industry standard credentials, transferable skills, articulating college credits, and employment & future career growth opportunities with one of our many contractor partners. I sit here before this committee as a successful completer of our apprenticeship program in Philadelphia, Class of 1997, complete with credentials, education and free... on the job training provided by journeypersons who have mastered their crafts over the years. This training didn't cost me, or PA taxpayers, one dime. It has allowed my wife and I the ability to provide a stable home for our family of four and a create a bright future for our children.

We have been requested to testify today here regarding three bills HB 1746, HB 1840, & HB 2041 that have been introduced to this chamber that relate directly to Apprenticeships.

1. Rep Gleim HB 1746: This bill attempts to restructure the Journeyman to Apprentice Ratios, basing this on the size of the business and perceived level of danger to the apprentice. ... Mr. Chairman, the entire premise of apprenticeships in construction came from workplace safety. This ability to work to provide for your family and go home at night is what everyone wants. Construction is a very hazardous occupation. At any time, you can be required to construct or work on a temporary

scaffold in a refinery or a power plant in confined space, or work at heights installing the protective leading-edge guardrails for workers...23 stories above the ground. Even installing a piece of intricate millwork requires training to operate safely pneumatic nail guns. While working as an apprentice, 26 years ago, I relied on the Master Journeypeople, who I worked with to look out for my safety as a young carpenter. I also learned many proper trade skills practices some right and some wrong, but all of those people who I worked with helped me through my apprenticeship supporting me to gain the knowledge, skills and confidence to be a successful component to a contractor's project profitability. Too reduce the ratio of Journeymen, based upon perceived safety hazards, is a reckless proposition, one that effects every person in Pennsylvania who aspires to have a long, safe, sustainable career in construction. The danger on a project is not mitigated by the size of one's employer or one's subjective view of a hazard. Diminishing the level of trained, experienced workers on projects will only increase the potential for accidents as well increased liability insurance costs for contractors in Pennsylvania. It will also reduce the number of qualified persons to support the OJT portion of a successful apprenticeship. **Accordingly, we would oppose HB 1746.**

2. Rep Tobash HB 2041: This House bill calls for an abolishment of our PA State Apprenticeship Council which is comprised of Industry and Labor leaders from across this Commonwealth, who have experience on how this state works together and thrives better than any Washington bureaucrat could ever do. Arguments can be made for SAC or BAT. However, I happen to represent programs in NJ & WVA which are BAT programs and PA, DE, MD and VA which are all SAC state programs. I can tell you from my hands-on experience, the programs that are under state jurisdiction function more effectively and efficiently than the federal programs. I attribute that to the connection between the apprenticeship programs and other state workforce development initiatives, as well as the clear lines of accountability that exist at the state level. The fact that I am sitting here discussing this with you today is a testament to that accountability. The other states in my jurisdiction that function as federal BAT states have experienced conflicts due to mutli-states responsibilities and the attention required to ensure that our apprentice program remain second to none is sometimes lacking. **Accordingly, we would oppose HB 2041.**

3. Rep Struzzi HB 1840: If the goal HB 1840 is to identify specific legislative changes needed to convert Pennsylvania to a federal BAT state, then we would oppose this legislation due to reasons previously stated. We prefer the SAC model.