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UNITED BROTHERHOOD OF CARPENTERS AND JOINERS OF AMERICA

March 22, 2021

The Honorable Zack Fields
Alaska State House
State Capital Room 24
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: Support for HB 132- SCHOOL APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS; TAX CREDITS

Dear Representative Fields,

I want to thank the House Labor & Commerce Committee for sponsoring HB 132, and offer our full support for this bill. We are grateful to see a bill that focuses on developing Alaska's next generation of skilled workers. Registered apprenticeships are good for workers and good for business, but we have long believed that we should strengthen the linkages between secondary schools and apprenticeship programs. We hope this bill will create greater alignment between the Departments of Labor and Education, the University of Alaska, and all registered apprenticeship programs, including those in the construction trades.

While many think of apprenticeship as a workforce development tool reserved only for the construction trades, the truth is that apprenticeship flourishes in Alaska in dozens of occupations, including health care, aviation, mining, and maritime. Registered apprenticeships also present opportunities for transitioning servicemen and women, who often struggle to translate the valuable skills they learned in the military into meaningful careers after their service. Currently, the Pacific Northwest Carpenters have 11 veterans enrolled in our apprenticeship program. Veterans are often some of our best and brightest apprentices, and become some of our most sought-after journeyman carpenters.

In high school, I struggled to maintain my focus in class, and felt that college wasn't the right path for me. Unfortunately, school counselors provided few other options. After several failed attempts at college, I was lucky enough to discover the Carpenters' apprenticeship program. After 7000 hours, working on a variety of project to hone my carpentry skills, I journeyed out of the program and began my career. Finding the Carpenters' apprenticeship program was one of the best things that ever happened to me. It has provided me a good-paying job, with health care and retirement benefits, and enabled me to raise a family right here in Juneau. But I wish that my high school teachers, counselors, and school administrators had steered me towards that career path much sooner.

We thank the committee for its commitment to workforce development. Alaska's youth deserve broad exposure to different career paths, including paths in vocational programs like registered apprenticeship. We support HB 132, which we hope will strengthen and expand Registered Apprenticeship in Alaska.

Sincerely,

Chris Dimond, Alaska Regional Manager
Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters