



Statement for the Record for Associated Builders and Contractors & Tri-M Group

Testimony of
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Before the
Career and Technical Education Caucus
On

The Role of Career & Technical Education in Creating a Skilled Workforce:
Perspectives from Employers and Stakeholders

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The Voice of the Merit Shop®

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

My name is Amanda Novak. I'm the Human Resources Manager at The Tri-M Group and the Associated Builders and Contractors Eastern Pennsylvania Apprenticeship Trust Chairman. Tri-M is an electrical solutions provider, headquartered in Chester County, PA. Tri-M provides a living to 400 employees throughout Pennsylvania and generates approximately \$80 million in revenue annually.

My organization is experiencing a workforce skills gap as baby boomers begin to retire, taking with them the much needed, and not easily replaceable hands-on experience and conventional knowledge they acquired over years in the industry. According to the AARP, 8,000 baby boomers turn 65 each day and, unfortunately, our younger generation is not entering the construction industry at the same rate as those reaching retirement age. This aging workforce combined with growth in the industry will result in a shortage of 1.6 million workers by 2022 according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. This shortage presents a challenge to our industry, but also provides career opportunities for young people interested in the construction industry.

Pennsylvania has identified construction trades, including electricians, as a high priority occupation, but there's still a lot of work to be done to align the skills shortage with our education system. Our education systems continue to focus on the four-year college prep curriculum and constantly miss opportunities to educate students on the career opportunities in the construction industry. While college degrees are important, students should be offered opportunities to learn skills that prepare them for high paying, in demand careers that don't require a bachelor's degree. Our entry level apprentices are paid to attend school and finish the program with no debt. Once they have completed their program, they have a license that is recognized industry-wide and are working full time within their field of study.

To combat the sometimes negative perception associated with a career in construction, Tri-M partners with local trade and high schools to educate students and teachers and provide them with scrap material to assist in teaching the appropriate hands-on skills. To ensure that curriculums meet industry standards we have employees who serve on boards, such as the Electrical Advisory Board at Lehigh Career and Technical Institute. Additionally, our CEO/President serves on the State Apprenticeship and Training Council to assist in ensuring standards are upheld throughout the industry.

In closing, we need our education system to be an advocate for the construction industry in order to afford students the opportunity to explore other in-demand career possibilities. It is imperative to the construction industry that schools allow the trades to have a presence and outline the successful, high paying career path our industry can provide.

Tri-M is very concerned about the future workforce skills gap and we appreciate your time on this important issue. Thank you very much.