



My name is Terry McGowan, and I am the President and Business Manager of the Wisconsin Operating Engineers. I appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony.

As everyone on the Committee is aware, finding the right worker with the right training can be a daunting task in today's competitive job environment. Apprenticeships are time-tested, higher education programs that allow workers to earn good wages while learning on the job. Youth apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeship programs expose high school students to careers and are a bridge to entry into adult registered apprenticeship programs.

Wisconsin Operating Engineers' adult and youth apprentices have little, direct tuition costs for their training. However, there are still costs that create a substantial barrier to entry into the trade, such as costs for tools, work boots, other safety materials, and transportation to and from the training center in Coloma, WI.

SB 747/AB 779 expands several existing apprenticeship programs. These changes will ensure that *all apprentices* who incur out-of-pocket costs have the opportunity to recoup a portion of those costs.

Mostly importantly for the Wisconsin Operating Engineers, the bill also contains provisions that will incentivize high schools to offer classes and programs that prepare students to enter the workforce. It provides for technical college dual enrollment and credit for students when a high school offers apprenticeship curriculum that is also offered to adult apprentices through technical colleges. In other words, high school students get technical college credit just like adult apprentices do for the same courses.

I know that the Wisconsin Technical College System opposes this provision. They have claimed that requiring them to offer dual enrollment to high school students somehow poses a risk to their higher education credentials. Frankly, this makes no sense to me. The Wisconsin Operating Engineers adult apprenticeship program is offered through Fox Valley Technical College. Fox Valley sits on the Operating Engineers' Skill Fund Board, together with contractors and Operating Engineers



with the technical knowledge of the industry. The Skill Fund Board, which, again includes a Fox Valley representative, reviews and approves the curriculum for completion of an Operating Engineer apprenticeship. Adult apprentices are enrolled in Fox Valley, and Fox Valley provides apprenticeship courses with technical college course numbers. The instructors for the adult apprenticeship courses are all authorized to teach these technical college courses.

The Wisconsin Operating Engineers offer several of its adult apprenticeship courses to high school students through an online virtual high school called Destinations Career Academy, which is sponsored out of the McFarland School District. Most students stay in their home school district and take apprenticeship courses through Destinations Career Academy on a part-time basis. Fox Valley refuses to allow Destinations Career Academy students dual enrollment and dual credit for the apprenticeship courses. Instead, they claim high school students must use a convoluted, advanced standing process to apply for technical college credit *after* high school graduation. This creates an artificial barrier for students and their parents. We should be making it easier for high school students and their parents to choose an apprenticeship path, not more difficult.

Fox Valley recently approached the Wisconsin Operating Engineers about offering its adult apprenticeship courses to high school students at a local high school. Fox Valley proposed to have students dual enrolled in the technical college system. If they can offer dual enrollment to high school students taking Operating Engineers' apprenticeship courses in a traditional school, students and their parents who choose to take the courses through an online public charter school should be treated no differently.

Technical colleges in Wisconsin offer dual enrollment for high school students for many, many courses. Apprenticeship courses should not be treated as less important for high school students than other courses for other educational pathways. SB 747/AB 779 helps remove barriers to entry into the workforce for students who elect to enter an apprenticeship.