



Iowa Chapter

### **Skilled Worker Shortage Study Committee**

Testimony submitted by: Tom Fulcher, Education Director  
Associated Builders and Contractors of Iowa

#### **Background Information:**

The Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) of Iowa is a non-profit trade association representing Iowa's merit shop construction industry. ABC of Iowa was founded in 1974 and represents over 400 contractors statewide. Our mission is: As the only construction trade association in Iowa dedicated to the merit shop philosophy, Associated Builders and Contractors of Iowa aggressively promotes and protects the free enterprise system and the merit shop philosophy by providing the best training, government and legal representation, and programs to add value to the industry's clients, enhance the lives of the industry's employees, and strengthen our members' opportunity to participate in a competitive and open market.

#### **Issue:**

The construction industry in Iowa is in need of skilled individuals who are committed to help advance economic growth and development in Iowa by pursuing a career in skilled trades. Our members are always looking for men and women to become a part of the industry. Iowa's construction industry faces severe shortages in well-trained employees. ABC of Iowa is working towards ensuring all of our member companies are able to educate their employees through a Department of Labor Bureau of Apprenticeship Training approved program.

#### **Industry/Education Linkage through ABC of Iowa:**

ABC of Iowa is focused on building relationships with high schools and community colleges in the state of Iowa. Below are three areas that ABC of Iowa strives to provide better linkage between industry and Iowa's education systems.

##### **High School/Community College**

ABC of Iowa attends several high school and college career fairs throughout Iowa in an effort to promote the construction industry as an excellent career path with unlimited opportunities. In addition, ABC of Iowa staff serves on advisory committees of community colleges and supports high school and community college industrial technology programs around the state.

Our members are also very active in promoting the construction industry. Webster Electric, Inc. (Waukee, Iowa) partners with Urbandale High School for an annual career fair as well as providing support for the building trades program at the high school. This is an excellent opportunity for students to interact with some of the best and brightest in the construction industry in an effort to make an intelligent career decision.

Department of Labor Apprenticeship Training Program

ABC of Iowa offers a Department of Labor approved four year apprenticeship program in the trades of electrical, plumbing, HVAC, sheet metal, carpentry, and mechanical insulation. These programs allow employers the opportunity to recruit employees using post-secondary industry education as a tool that will attract and retain interested young men and women to the construction industry.

260F Funding

ABC of Iowa would like to thank the Iowa Legislature for providing funding to our programs through 260F. ABC of Iowa currently has 260F funding agreements with four of the states community colleges. We are working toward obtaining additional contracts beginning fall 2007. These agreements benefit the community college as well as ABC of Iowa by providing funding that allows both entities to present quality Department of Labor, Bureau of Apprenticeship training programs to the construction industry.

**Potential industry/government solutions to address the worker shortage:**

Traditionally, tech prep/vocational education classes are one of the first areas in school districts' budgets that get cut. Increasing tech-prep classes in high school and addressing skilled trades as a viable career path will help encourage students, who might otherwise choose not to continue their education, an opportunity for them to enter into a well-paying, rewarding career in the construction industry. Governor Culver has declared October 15-19 "Careers in Construction Week." Careers in Construction week gives both industry and government a chance to highlight the opportunities skilled trades have for high school students and other individuals who are interested in a career change.

ABC of Iowa and the community colleges continue to expand their relationship. As more students enroll in training programs around the state, 260F funding needs will increase. As an avenue to keeping workers in the state and recruiting individuals to the industry, it is important that both parties have adequate funding mechanisms to keep costs low for our students by providing 260F funds.

**Conclusion:**

ABC of Iowa's members acknowledge the issue facing the construction industry and the entire state workforce. As an association that represents over 400 contractors and 4,000 employees statewide, we are very appreciative of the time and energy the legislature has put forth into addressing the workforce shortage in the state. Thank you for your time.

**For More Information Contact:**

Tom Fulcher, Education Director

or

Nicole Molt, Government Affairs Director  
Associated Builders and Contractors of Iowa  
475 Alices Road, Suite A  
Waukee, IA 50263  
515-987-3790  
[www.abciowa.org](http://www.abciowa.org)