



**Massachusetts
Chapter**

Testimony of Greg Beeman
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Senate 2019 - An Act to Mobilize Economic Recovery in Massachusetts

ABC, representing 475 contractors and related businesses throughout Massachusetts, supports the provisions of Senate 2019, an Act to Mobilize Economic Recovery in Massachusetts, to help Massachusetts take maximum advantage of the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009.

The recommendations in the bill are designed to help expedite the procurement process for stimulus-funded projects while ensuring public interest safeguards remain in place. The legislation also seeks to expand opportunities for new entrants to the construction industry through a consensus-based approach to apprentice training. ABC believes the apprentice language in this bill will allow for more participation among smaller contractors than typical apprentice mandates found in so-called Responsible Employer Ordinances in place in some 20 Massachusetts municipalities.

ABC supports apprentice training and trains through the Gould Construction Institute, a state-licensed and accredited private school that ABC owns and operates. The Gould Institute provides apprentice, craft and management training throughout Massachusetts. More than 90 of our member firms have state-approved apprentice training programs. But for many smaller, open shop or non-union firms, mandated participation in state-approved apprentice training programs is very difficult.

A fundamental issue in the apprenticeship discussion is that the two segments of the industry, union and open shop, operate differently – in general and with regard to training. The state-approved apprentice training system is based on the union model with pooled labor and one centralized training program. This one apprentice program is then utilized by all union contractors signatory to the union. In the open shop industry, where there is no labor pool and contractors hire their workers directly, each contractor has its own independent program.

By establishing apprentice requirements on a per project basis, as opposed to a mandate for each participating contractor, smaller firms that do not have state-approved programs are not excluded.

ABC believes it is essential that there be enough flexibility in government apprentice training provisions to allow for participation among all segments of the industry and all firms, union and open shop, large and small. We think this language, borne out of consensus and compromise,





is a positive step in that regard.

We believe it is an important benefit of the stimulus program to provide opportunities for viable career paths for young workers and others seeking a career in construction. Apprenticeship programs that recognize and allow for the differences in our industry will help us provide more rewarding careers in the construction industry.

We recognize the inherent difficulty in achieving compromise when positions are long-held and significantly divergent. We commend the Patrick/Murray administration for its willingness to seek consensus and we believe the efforts of all parties, from administration leaders such as Undersecretary Gonzales, Secretary Bump and Director Wallace, along with representatives from industry, labor, municipalities and others, will yield benefits through more workable and inclusive apprentice policies.

For many of us involved in the process or affected by the outcome, these requirements are a reach in that they are new, different or both. I know that there are concerns about, for example, the 20 percent apprentice man-hours per project and about how these requirements will work with filed sub bids. The report of the procurement task force noted these concerns and possible additional steps that may be needed to address them.

I think given the spirit of consensus that has brought us to this point and the shared interest in advancing career opportunities in construction, we can deal with any legitimate issues that develop in the implementation of these apprenticeship provisions. In this case, the collective thinking was to seize the unique occasion of the stimulus program as an opportunity to advance something important with the goal of making it work.

I urge the committee to swiftly endorse S 2019.

