



December 4, 2023

Councilmembers
Whatcom County
311 Grand St, Bellingham, WA 98225

RE: AB2023-736 Ordinance amending Whatcom County Code Chapter 3.72,
Construction projects - apprentice requirements, to align with RCW 39.04.320

Hello Councilmembers,

I am submitting comments in support of the proposed Whatcom County ordinance, AB2023-736, to amend the current Whatcom County Construction Apprenticeship Requirements for public work projects in excess of \$1M to align with the recently passed WA State House Bill 1050. The state bill will enact apprenticeship requirements of 15% across all municipalities in the state for projects greater than \$1M that will be fully implemented July 1, 2028. The proposed ordinance revision will effectively delay the implementation of the 2022 revised WCC apprenticeship ordinance to be \$1M threshold with 15% apprenticeship six months to July 1, 2024 instead of going forward with ordinance previously to start Jan 1, 2024.

AGC of Washington and our members strongly support apprenticeship to create a skilled, trained, and safe construction workforce. We need to find additional pathways to increase the pipeline of those entering the construction workforce. It is estimated that nearly 750,000 skilled tradespersons nationwide will be retiring from the construction industry over the next 8 years without enough entry level workers entering into construction.

While AGC is in support of apprenticeship, we also recognize that there is much needed reform at the state level for the access to approved Washington State Apprenticeship Training Council (WSATC) apprenticeship programs for open shop and WMBE/SBE contractors to further develop our future construction workforce. Currently there are many institutional challenges that restrict the number of apprenticeship programs approved ranging from existing programs challenging the applications of new apprenticeship programs, challenges related to diversity and inclusion within certain apprenticeship programs for underrepresented contractors facing additional barriers, or to the expense to implement an apprenticeship program created by the challenges.

While AGC and our Whatcom County member contractors realize the apprenticeship access challenges are not within the control of the Whatcom County Council, it is important that keep in mind with HB 1050 going into effect, this will substantially increase the demand for apprentices in the industry across Washington. To address these challenges, it's essential for policymakers, educational institutions, and industry stakeholders to collaborate in creating more accessible pathways to apprenticeship programs.

Thank you for taking the time to note AGC of Washington's support of the proposed revision of the Whatcom County Construction Utilization Program. Hopefully this will further assist in the development of the future construction workforce in our community. With increasing apprenticeship requirements, we need to also support increased access to certified apprenticeship programs for all contractors, regardless of affiliation, who meet the standards to operate a certified WSATC apprenticeship program.

Thank you and if you have any questions that I or AGC can assist with, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



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