

After reading through House Bill 1002, I was able to identify a few different ideas to help promote Indiana's Building Trades Unions' growth. There are some fairly easy things that can be done to start to encourage high school students to become interested in the trades. The first would be to begin to promote vocational programs not just to the students but also to the community and parents. Secondly teachers need to be educated on Indiana's Building Trades Unions. Many educators push students toward college and away from the trades. If more teachers, parents, and communities in general were educated on how the trades operate and the benefits involved with them they may be more likely to support them.

Upon completion of the reading through the eight digests there were a few of them that stuck out more than the others to me. Digest 4 is "connecting students with funds." This was something that I found very interesting. There are millions of dollars in scholarships for those who are pursuing college degrees, yet very little for those going through apprenticeships. This was something that I noticed my first year of filling out scholarship applications. There are all of these requirements that go into qualifying for a scholarship, many of which do not apply to those going through the apprenticeship programs. While most apprenticeship programs pay their students a wage, one cannot forget the price of books and needed protective clothing and footwear. These items can be costly and if the path to connect apprentices to these scholarships was made easier with more access, it may lead to more students wanting to join the programs. Many people don't know how to sift through all the scholarships out there to find the ones that apply to them. This is something that if fixed may prove to be helpful to both the applicants and the programs.

Digest 5 was "connecting students with a career fund." The trades should be utilizing this to their advantage. Many kids don't grow up around the trades. I have been around the trades my

entire life. My father is part of IBEW Local 697, and my grandfather was part of Ironworkers Local 395. Growing up in northwest Indiana around the mills this is not uncommon to have multiple family members in the trades. However, in some places that may have less access and knowledge they may not see the trades as a career option and a way out of poverty or an alternative route than college.

There is a program, Indiana Plan, that is being utilized in Lake County that teaches students in the area about the trades. After looking into Indiana Plan, I found out that there are only two sites for the state, one in Gary and one in Indianapolis. Additional program sites could play a key role in connecting students with the trades. By no means am I proposing to add a campus in every county, but it would be beneficial to add more campuses across the state. There are 852 labor unions in Indiana. Even growing up surrounded by the trades I had no idea that there were that many labor unions in our state. If a person who has been around this industry their entire life did not know about that then how are those who have not been around it forever supposed to know about it without programs like Indiana Plan. If an area is not a fan of including an Indiana Plan into their community, then it should be rebranded to appeal to more individuals. Instead of calling it Indiana Plan, call it Indiana's Future or something along those lines to help instill a sense of hope in the program. Hope from the current union members, the kids going through the program, and the community. Hope is a very powerful thing that can be used to everyone's advantage in this situation.

The final digest that stuck out to me was digest 6, "teacher higher education and industry collaboration grant program and fund." This was the section that stood out the most to me. Most teachers push their students toward college and deter them from the trades. This can be done both outright and more unconsciously, for example by asking the question, "Where are you going

to college?” rather than the more general “What are you doing after graduation”? This deterrence away from the trades as a viable option for a good living was made apparent to me a few years ago. Reportedly, there was a student at a local high school who was supposed to be giving a speech during his graduation ceremony. When the school found out that he was going into the trades he was no longer allowed to give the speech. If teachers at the high school and middle school levels provided even a quarter as much information and support for the trades as they do college, it would help to bring awareness to the trades. Vocation programs are amazing ways for students to learn about careers and options other than college. The Porter County Career Center offers students 26 different vocational classes that range from agriculture, mechanic, health science, veterinary, as well as a construction class. If there were more options like this throughout the state it would bring awareness to both the trades in general as well as to each individual discipline.

I hope that this essay has provided some insights into just some of the steps that can be taken to help promote Indiana’s Building Trades Unions. I have benefitted from my father and grandfather enjoying their work and providing for their families. I hope others can as well.