



Statement for the Record for Greater Michigan Construction Academy

Testimony of Jimmy E Greene, CEO/President

***Before the Michigan House Committee on
Workforce and Talent Development***

On

***"Preparing Today's Students for Tomorrow's Apprenticeship
Jobs in the Skilled Trades***

February 5, 2015

Chairman Johnson, and members of the Committee; Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on "Preparing Today's Students for Tomorrow's Apprenticeships in the Commercial Construction Skilled Trades sector.

My name is Jimmy Greene. I serve as the CEO & President of The Greater Michigan Construction Academy, a 501c3 State Proprietary School in Midland & Lansing. As Mr. Fisher stated, our primary function since 1975 here in Michigan has indeed been to **Engage** companies that want safe and quality training for their employees, **Educate** those employees with a Nationally certified apprenticeship training program and most importantly to provide for **Employment** opportunities and fill employment gaps in the commercial construction sector. Mr. Fisher has already stated the case very well on the increasing demand for a trained workforce. The Greater Michigan Construction Academy is providing that training opportunity now in 11 different trades for over 300 construction firms throughout our footprint. These companies, many very familiar names build not just in Michigan but across the Country. We are proud to train that workforce. Since 1983, Independent auditors have shown that ABC Greater Michigan Chapter member contractors and industry-related partners like Dow Chemical have privately funded more than \$7,000,000 in training costs.

While Mr. Fisher did an exceptional job nationalizing this issue I would like to localize it to demonstrate what is possible and where potential solutions for collaboration between private and business entities coexist to both train and fill the Skilled Trades gap. Since 1985; our training facility and instruction by some of the most qualified instructors in the U.S, we have partnered with a Fortune 50 company in our backyard; Dow Chemical to deliver apprenticeship training that has translated into over 2-3 million man hours inside Dow's plant operations per year. Long before STEM became a buzzword for many; working with and in Dow Chemical's rigid standards for both safety and competency; we've taught those principles as a necessary component in carpentry, insulation, pipe-fitting, electrical, welding, and many other trades. Contrary to the old stereotype, skilled trades are not the place for less than proficient student. Companies like Dow Chemical not only appreciate that fact but support it in its support for our training. That kind of training creates a worker that receives not just higher wages and experience but more job satisfaction, greater job retention and a much safer work environment.

From that great collaboration with Dow Chemical, yet another partner has entered into the equation; The Midland County School District's Superintendents under the guidance of The Midland ESA Superintendent. The Greater Michigan Construction Academy now offers construction craft education programs at its Midland training center for any interested Junior or Senior in the County High Schools; Midland Dow, Midland High, Coleman, Bullock Creek, & Meridian. By utilizing our facilities The Greater Michigan Construction Academy serves as the lead training partner for skilled trades. Midland County schools are now focused on leveraging capacity at high schools as well as leveraging assets such as facilities and funding. Training schedules have been amended to accommodate the District's students, giving us the opportunity to compress schedules for industry based certifications (NCCER).

Currently, our training centers have a combined enrollment of more than 300 high school and adult students attending either at day or night. A junior attending our academy during the day with credit hours; graduates from high school with 1 ½ years of Apprenticeship training under their belt at 17 or 18 years of age. Their value to a potential employer is immediate. Even with an exploding demand for a skilled construction workforce, most secondary school systems are not structured to deliver a high level of technical education. Public high schools almost exclusively focus on the four-year college prep curriculum for all students.

While this pathway is important, students should be offered opportunities to learn skills that prepare them for the many high paying, in-demand careers that do not require an Associates or Bachelor's degree. That said, the expansion of Career and Technical Education options should never come at the expense of academic rigor or quality instruction and must clearly align with industry workforce needs and post-secondary credentials. Michigan must prepare its young people for success in the classroom and in the workplace.

In an effort to bring consistency and transferability to the curriculum that training providers use in the classrooms and labs, the Greater Michigan Construction Academy and the Midland ESA insured that we have the curriculum of the NCCER, a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) education foundation was consistent with State of Michigan standards, and they actually surpassed them. This curriculum blends classroom instruction with hands-on training that articulates to post-secondary credential and community college programs. Aligning industry-recognized curriculum with community and trade schools, high schools, and The Greater Michigan Construction Academy allows students and instructors to easily transition from one provider to another depending on personal needs and capacity requirements.

