

June 24, 2020

Joint Committee Testimony: Jon Byrd – Michigan Laborers Union

- Good morning, Mr. Chairman, and good morning to the members of the committee. My name is Jon Byrd, and I'm the Director of External Affairs for the Michigan Laborers.
- I am grateful for the opportunity to speak to you briefly today on behalf of organized labor in Michigan in support of House Resolution 282, and more broadly in support of the Great Lakes Tunnel.
- In Michigan, we love our lakes, value our paychecks, and work hard at our jobs.
- The new, high-tech, Great Lakes Tunnel planned for deep below the Mackinac Straits protects all three.
- With the state emerging from a global health pandemic, it's a project that couldn't be more important.
- For our part, the Michigan Laborers have gone beyond simply supporting the Tunnel. The Michigan Laborers recently helped launch a new coalition of the state's leading labor, business and industry voices who are speaking together – Great Lakes. Michigan Jobs. – to support construction of the Great Lakes Tunnel.
- This is a coalition that features labor organizations such as the Michigan Laborers Union, the Operating Engineers Local 324, and Michigan Building and Construction Trades Council, and business groups such as the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, Michigan Manufacturers Association, Michigan Chemistry Council, SBAM, and others.
- This is a unique building project, and today's resolution represents a unique opportunity for Democrats and Republicans to stand together.
- For our part, let me tell you a little more about the Michigan Laborers, and why the Great Lakes Tunnel is such an important project for us.
- The Laborers International Union of North America, LIUNA, represents over half a million members in the United States and Canada primarily in the construction industry.
- Our affiliated Union in Michigan represents 13,000 hardworking skilled tradesmen and women which are organized into seven local unions throughout different regions in the state.
- We operate four state-of-the-art training facilities and pride ourselves on being one of the safest, most productive workforces in Michigan.
- We offer some of the best benefits in the industry, and with our contractor partners, independently operate our healthcare and pension funds without government help.

- Our Healthcare fund provides over \$75 million in benefits annually and our Pension Funds add another \$100 million to our State's economy. In fact, our Pension Fund has paid over \$1.5 billion in benefits since its inception.
- When it comes to the energy sector, our Union has an "all-of-the-above" approach to upgrading our energy infrastructure. We work on projects that include wind, geothermal, solar, nuclear, coal, and transportation systems that include pipelines.
- In Michigan, our members do several million hours of pipeline and underground work every year and we take the upmost pride insuring our projects provide safe, reliable energy for our State.
- Building the Tunnel will protect the Great Lakes, make an already safe pipeline safer, create jobs, and protect tens of thousands of additional Michigan jobs when we need them most.
- Placing the pipeline in a state-of-the-art concrete tunnel deep under the lakebed also provides multiple layers of protection; safeguarding the Straits from the risk of an oil spill.
- In fact, an expert study commissioned by the state of Michigan examined the possibility of oil leaking into the Great Lakes from the proposed tunnel and found the risk "un-quantifiably low."
- The Tunnel is also a critical piece of the State's economic infrastructure. Building and operating the Great Lakes Tunnel will require roughly 2 million manhours of labor – largely Michigan labor.
- It's also a project that means hundreds of millions of dollars in capital investment, as well as tens of millions of dollars in local property, sales, and income tax revenue for our local communities.
- What's more, Enbridge has agreed to foot the \$500 million bill for the project, so taxpayers aren't on the hook for the project's development.
- With so much on the line, it's really no wonder why this project is backed by Democrats and Republicans, business and labor, families "Up North" and across the lower peninsula.
- I would now like to introduce Katie Barglind to highlight the work our Union is doing to bring more women into the construction industry.

Joint Committee Testimony: Katie Barglind – LECET/NAWIC

- Thanks Jon. Good morning Mr. Chairman, and good morning to the members of the committee. My name is Katie Barglind, and I'm the Market Share and Communications Representative with the Michigan Laborers Employers Cooperation and Education Trust and proud member of the National Association of Women in Construction and supporter of Women in Skilled Trades program.
- I am grateful for the opportunity to speak to you briefly today in support of House Resolution 282.
- In addition to offering a safe alternative to Line 5, building the Great Lakes Tunnel presents vast opportunities for women to advance in the construction industry. Seeing that women represent only a fraction of the construction industry workforce, approximately 5%, the Great Lakes Tunnel is a project that provides opportunities for women to get into construction.

- I am from Michigan's Upper Peninsula. These are the types of jobs that we need in the area, especially after this pandemic. The jobs that the Great Lakes Tunnel will create and sustain are not the usual seasonal tourist jobs that bring in minimum wage pay with no benefits. They are good paying jobs with benefits, and with plenty of opportunity for advancement. Jobs that are not just for men, but for women as well.
- Like many other women, I never considered a job in the construction industry. I actually have a legal background, but I found myself working in the labor movement after law school and made my way to LIUNA working in business development. It's a field I am a passionate about and I want to pave the way for other women.
- Let me tell you a little more about the Women in Skilled Trades program, and why the Great Lakes Tunnel is such an important project to help level the playing field for women in construction in Michigan.
- WIST has developed programs and events, such as its Apprenticeship Readiness Program, to help educate and inform women about the fulfilling career opportunities in the construction trades. Students who complete the 15-week Apprenticeship Readiness Program gain the skills and confidence to work in the construction industry, receive a nationally-recognized certificate of completion, and are given an opportunity to interview with partnering companies.
- By exposing more women to the exciting opportunities in the skilled trades, we are hoping to fill that labor gap AND support women throughout their journey. WIST alumni in Michigan get together and answer questions for women interested in joining the program, and give them an idea about what to expect in the Apprenticeship Readiness program.
- I have seen first-hand what a huge impact joining the skilled trades can have in a woman's life. And I'm urging each of you to back this important infrastructure project.
- Building the Tunnel will provide great opportunities for women to enter the trades and advance their careers in construction.
- I'm urging each of you to back this important infrastructure project.
- I would now like to introduce Daryl Gallant to discuss the work our Training Fund is doing to prepare for the project.

Joint Committee Testimony: Daryl Gallant – Michigan Laborers Training and Apprenticeship Institute

- Thank you, Katie. Good morning Mr. Chairman, and good morning to the members of the committee. My name is Daryl Gallant, and I am the Training Director at Michigan Laborers' Training and Apprenticeship Institute. We are the training arm for the seven Laborers Local Unions in the State of Michigan. I also hold a seat as a commissioner on the State of Michigan's Building Code Commission.
- I am grateful for the opportunity to speak to you briefly today in support of House Resolution 282.
- MLTAI is gearing-up over the opportunity to build the Great Lakes Tunnel project. Every year we train four to five thousand students in construction, and health and safety at our four training centers. In partnership with our signatory contractors, we raise over \$6 million dollars annually to provide state-

- I discovered my appetite for learning and teaching much later in life than most traditional educators. I did not complete my college degree until I was in my 40's. I grew up in the Detroit area and spent half my career in Infrastructure and Heavy Highway work and the second half of my career teaching people how to work in construction.
- The Pipeline Safety class that we are proud to offer has been in demand over the last 10 years. We have trained over 500 students to have the skills they need to return home safely at night to their families.
- We also provide our Apprenticeship program at no cost to the student and they are able to "earn while they learn." Students are able to learn valuable skills from trained Journeymen while earning a weekly paycheck to support themselves and their families.
- In addition, most of our training staff have completed certification in the American National Safety Institute, making them among the highest qualified instructors in the construction industry.
- We are also proud to be one of the only training programs in the State to have an in-house occupational health nurse within our staff, which has been such a blessing as we develop new protocols to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Infrastructure maintenance, and repairs have always been in my make-up. Recently, I spent my Memorial Day weekend up in the Village of Sanford, Michigan working with 60 other co-workers, contractor partners, apprentices, and volunteers, cleaning up, removing, and hauling off damaged property from the failure of the area dams.
- Many of us take our infrastructure for granted. As some like to say, "Out of sight, out of mind." but to do this work safely, the state needs a skilled workforce. Updating our infrastructure creates jobs that pay our residents a decent wage. Have we not learned from that terrible experience in Flint that as our infrastructure ages it must be replaced? Many of the components that are 'out of sight, out of mind' have a life expectancy.
- Building this Tunnel will protect the Great Lakes, create skilled union jobs, and improve opportunities for Michigan residents to enter the trades and advance their careers in construction.
- I'm urging each of you to not think "out of sight, out of mind," and consider the importance of this infrastructure project. When I was a young child, I used to watch an ad on Detroit TV for a muffler repair shop and their tag line was, "you can pay me now, or pay me later."
- Well, I don't need to have a degree in economics to know it is cheaper to fix things now before we pay the much higher price later.
- With that, I'll turn it back over to Jon Byrd.

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- Thank you Daryl and Katie.
- Mr. Chairman, as you can see, the Michigan Laborers Union is ready to get to work on this exciting project that will protect the Great Lakes, provide family-supporting union jobs, and ensure that we have the energy to keep our citizens warm in the Michigan winters.
- I'm urging each of you, Democrats and Republicans, to stand with the Michigan Laborers today to back this important infrastructure project.
- With that, we are grateful for the opportunity to share our thoughts with the committee and are happy to answer any questions you may have.