

Ohio State Building and Construction Trades Council

**Statement of Michael Knisley
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**Before the
Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs
United States Senate
July 31, 2024**

**“Long-Term Economic Benefits and Impacts from Federal Infrastructure
and Public Transportation Investment.”**

Good morning, Chairman Brown, Ranking Member Scott and members of the committee. Thank you for your leadership on building a resilient economy for American workers and their communities through federal investment.

My name is Mike Knisley. I'm here to testify on the impact that federal investments are having on the 100,000 men and women that I represent as Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the Ohio State Building and Construction Trades Council.

In our nearly 60 years as a Building Trades Council: There's never been a brighter future for the Tradespeople who build Ohio. Ohio owes this bright future to smart public-private investment - led by strong bipartisan leadership in Congress.

We're building BIG in Ohio. Over the next decade, we're looking at over *\$200 Billion dollars* in construction projects that will create generational careers that provide prevailing wages with healthcare and retirement benefits; as well as tuition-free Apprenticeship training for both present and future tradespeople.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act means that thousands of tradespeople in Southern Ohio and Northern Kentucky will build the Brent Spence Bridge. This bridge which besides being long overdue is a vital transportation corridor for our region and will be built by a diverse generation of construction workers – including tradeswomen like Saria Gwin-Maye of Ironworkers Local 44.

The CHIPS and Science Act means that nearly ten-thousand construction tradespeople will build Intel's newest semiconductor fabs in Columbus, Ohio. This project is creating family-sustaining construction jobs across the Central Ohio Region – but also in Ohio's Appalachian communities where the residents can see opportunity on the horizon again.

There's excitement in the air at places like IBEW 1105's Electrical Training Center, where a whole new generation of tradespeople will begin their Apprenticeships on the Intel project including having the potential to work their entire career at that facility, upgrading and maintaining the fabs.

Imagine that – lifelong, family-sustaining construction careers within commuting distance of Ohio's counties. This type of investment has the potential to deliver lasting economic recovery in Ohio's struggling towns.

Statewide the Ohio Building Trades have scaled-up their workforce development to meet the demand driven by these investments. Across Ohio, our 80 privately funded apprenticeship training centers are taking in their largest classes ever. The Building Trades training model is the gold-standard in workforce development where they train over 80% of all construction apprentices in Ohio – with zero tax dollars.

The continued high-road investment in construction projects generate the steady demand of apprentices needed for the next generation of local tradespeople.

Underinvestment in our nation’s infrastructure over the past 30 years has hurt economic growth in the communities where our members live and work. Now, with new infrastructure investment in places like my hometown of Lima, Ohio, good paying construction jobs are on the rise creating an environment where young people do not have to leave the Buckeye state to support their families.

The Ohio Building Trades believe that the rising tide of economic opportunity **MUST BE WITHIN REACH FOR ALL** Ohioans – including women, people of color, and veterans.

Thanks to our partners in industry and at every level of government whose commitment to responsible contracting and sustainable jobs means that Ohio’s rising economic tide reaches working families in Ohio.

Our commitment to our partners, is this: **We will get the job done.**

We ask you to match our commitment by ensuring that federally funded construction jobs go to American tradespeople. These jobs must provide benefits to working families in our communities. Despite the heavy workforce demand in certain regions of our state, there is still depressed areas that have local tradespeople being displaced by companies who hire workers without proper documentation to work well below the required prevailing wage and without any benefits.

Properly executed, each new project built through federal investment strengthens Ohio’s construction workforce by growing our communities through local wages and benefits for working families.

And you can take the Building Trades’ commitment to equal economic opportunity to the bank:

Our journey people and apprentices are protected by Collective Bargaining Agreements. CBAs are the great equalizer in wages, health care and retirement equity on every jobsite. They guarantee that each worker - regardless of race or gender - earns, dollar-for-dollar, the same pay as everyone else.

When Ohio’s Building Tradespeople are bringing home a steady paycheck from major projects, their entire communities feel the economic benefits of those earnings. And thanks to federal investment, these are the working Ohioans who will someday drive past Intel’s factories or across the Brent Spence Bridge and say to their children and grandchildren: “I built that.”

Thank you for allowing me to voice the economic stability and hope for the future that thousands of Ohio Building Tradespeople and a new generation of Ohio Construction Apprentices have thanks to these federal investments in American workers.

I will end with my final comment: “Good infrastructure and investment policies that comes out of Washington create great outcomes in our local communities”