

**TESTIMONY OF
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND
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AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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Good afternoon, Chairperson Norton and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for extending an invitation to speak with you about the benefits offered by the creation of green buildings and efforts to make existing buildings more energy efficient.

Supporting a green economy is a top priority at the U.S. Department of Labor. President Obama and Secretary Solis have made the creation and expansion of good green jobs a top priority and believe that green jobs will be a key driver behind America's economic revitalization and sustained economic stability. Green jobs will benefit the American worker by offering good wages, pathways to long-term career advancement, and prosperity.

At the Department of Labor, we are working to support green jobs primarily through investments in the development of quality labor market information about green jobs, investments in training and reemployment services to support the job growth in green industries, and encouraging Registered Apprenticeship in green industries, which include occupations in construction and building retrofitting.

Currently, the Department is making significant investments in the energy efficiency and renewable energy industries, which are closely related to the construction

of new commercial and residential buildings, as well as the retrofitting of existing buildings.

An initial step is the investment of \$500 million provided under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Recovery Act) to prepare workers to pursue careers in energy efficiency and renewable energy industries. On June 24, 2009, Secretary Solis announced five grant competitions, which will provide for research, labor exchange and job training projects. Four of the competitions are designed to serve workers in need of training through various national, state and community outlets: Energy Training Partnership Grants; Pathways Out of Poverty Grants; State Energy Sector Partnership and Training Grants; and Green Capacity Building Grants. The fifth competition is for State Labor Market Information Improvement Grants that will fund state workforce agencies to collect, analyze and disseminate labor market information and to educate individuals about careers in green industries. Through these investments, the Department is partnering with other Federal agencies to support the creation of jobs by developing a pipeline of skilled workers in the energy efficiency and renewable energy industries. Where possible, the Department's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) encourages applicants for these grants to connect their workforce development strategies to other Recovery Act funded projects that create jobs or impact the skill requirements of existing jobs.

In addition to the significant investment under the Recovery Act, ETA plans to promote training in green industries, including green construction, through its regular programs. For example, ETA is encouraging green construction through its YouthBuild program. This program helps disadvantaged youth gain high school credentials and skill

training that leads to employment, while building or rehabilitating affordable housing for low-income or homeless families in poor communities. ETA is providing YouthBuild grantees with technical assistance in green construction techniques, knowledge of, and ability to work with sustainable building products, solar panel installation, and weatherization techniques to ensure that YouthBuild participants are prepared for the green economy and high- wage careers associated with it.

The Department also plans to expand our efforts to place and encourage retention of women in apprenticeship programs in green industries through its Women in Apprenticeship and Non-Traditional Occupations Act (WANTO) program, a program jointly administered by ETA and the Department's Women's Bureau. In recent years, grants awarded under this program have focused on projects to improve the recruitment, selection, training and employment of women in the construction industry.

Further, the Department's Office of Job Corps is taking steps to incorporate green technologies in the future construction and repair of its nationwide network of Job Corps centers. Job Corps also plans to develop and implement green jobs training into the construction curricula at all centers.

The Department is also supporting green job training, skill development, and capacity building through the development of new initiatives. For example, ETA is currently proposing in its Fiscal Year 2010 budget request, the creation of a Green Jobs Innovation Fund which would utilize \$50 million to help workers access green training and green career pathways. This proposed initiative would include a variety of strategies, such as: 1) enhanced pre-apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship programs in green industries and occupations; 2) competitive grants for Green Career Pathways

through post-secondary education and training to reach low income communities, persons with limited English proficiency, and other under-skilled youth and adults; and 3) incentives for partnerships that connect effective community-based organizations in underserved communities with the workforce system and employers to promote career advancement in green industry sectors.

The Department has undertaken several initiatives to enhance knowledge about emerging green industries. The Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), in collaboration with other Federal agencies, is working to define "green jobs". In the Department's recently issued Solicitation of Grant Applications green jobs have been described as jobs in "energy efficiency and renewable energy industries". This description was useful for guiding our initial investments, but does not capture the full range of labor market information in this rapidly evolving area. The development of a definition of green jobs will facilitate the Department's ability to capture and provide high quality labor market information to governments, businesses, individuals and other stakeholders.

Also, the Department funded a report by the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) titled *Greening of the World of Work: Implications for O*NET-SOC and New and Emerging Occupations*. The purpose of the report was to investigate the impact of green economy activities and technologies on occupational requirements for current jobs and to identify new and emerging occupations. Green construction was one of the sectors studied. The O*NET study identified 17 occupations in this sector, such as welders and insulation workers, where the primary impact would be increased demand as a result of green investments, and notes that while "the work context may change, the tasks

themselves do not.” Another 19 occupations in Green Construction were identified as ones requiring “Green Enhanced Skills,” where green activities and technologies result in a significant change to the work and worker requirements of an existing occupation, such as plumbers, roofers, and sheet metal workers.

Finally, ETA has recently added green building practices to their existing Residential Construction Competency Model. Specific competencies include efficiency competencies, such as the ability to perform home energy audits, and waste management which includes the ability to identify construction materials that can be reused or recycled rather than disposed.

Research shows that green construction jobs will be well-paying jobs. The May 2008 Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates published by BLS indicate that construction and extraction occupations pay a median hourly rate of \$18.24 as opposed to \$15.57 for all occupations.

The labor market information provided by the Department will be crucial to the private sector as businesses adapt to the emerging green economy. It is anticipated that continued efforts in the public and private sector to reduce energy consumption and other environmental impacts within commercial and residential buildings (such as the Energy Star program sponsored by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Energy) means that occupations dealing with the manufacture of retrofitting products and their installation will continue to be in demand. This increased demand for green retrofitting work coupled with the demand for green building materials is anticipated to increase the need for workers in manufacturing industries as well.

Apprenticeship programs working with industry already have begun to update their curriculum to incorporate an emphasis on green technologies, processes and materials. For example:

- Service Employees International Union has developed green building classes that cover energy usage, water conservation, green cleaning and maintenance.
- Home Builders Institute and the National Association of Home Building (HBI/NAHB) have developed various green courses including Green Building for Building Professionals, Green Project Management and Advanced Green Building Science.
- Laborer's International Union of North America has created a comprehensive weatherization training program comprised of courses that teach the skills needed to become a weatherization technician, energy auditor or supervisor. Other courses in the program cover general construction, safety and environmental hazards, and life and employability skills.

Industry stakeholders are also working to link pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs to improve both consistency and quality while establishing clear expectations for the training provider and the participant:

- The United Association of Plumbers and Pipe Fitters (UA) is an apprenticeship partner in the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organization's new Emerald Cities Initiative that seeks to launch comprehensive building energy efficiency initiatives in urban centers across the country. Helmets to Hard-hats as well as UA's Veterans in Piping

- HBI/NAHB is developing green interim credentials for both its pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs.

To encourage these types of efforts, ETA is conducting a grant competition to fund the development and implementation of apprenticeship standards. These grants will support the expansion of apprenticeship programs in high-growth fields, including green industries.

The Department is coordinating many of its efforts with Federal partners to ensure that investments are strategically targeted and that waste is minimized. One such effort is Labor's partnership with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to bring job training and employment opportunities to public housing residents. Through this new partnership, residents of public housing will be able to more easily find training programs and sustainable employment in the green job sectors created by the Recovery Act. In addition, Secretary Solis and Energy Secretary Steven Chu have been working together to properly leverage Recovery Act investments and to coordinate their efforts to ensure that workers hired for new jobs in weatherization receive proper training.

During a recent visit to job training sites for youth and veterans in California, Secretary Solis visited the Department of Labor's Federal regional office in San Francisco, which is located in one of the greenest Federal buildings in the nation.

Secretary Solis believes that it is important that the Department lead by example and has begun initial talks with the General Services Administration (GSA) to help green our Federal buildings. The Recovery Act provides \$4.5 billion to GSA to convert Federal

buildings into high performing green buildings, including \$3 million for Registered Apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs in construction, repair and alteration of Federal Buildings. The Department is working collaboratively with GSA to support these apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs. Investing in energy efficient upgrades to Federal buildings around the country will create jobs while substantially reducing American energy use and cut the Federal government consumption.

In conclusion, Department of Labor will continue to work with green building stakeholders at all levels, public and private, to ensure that the economic and environmental benefits of green jobs are widely shared. The Department is pleased to be able to participate in today's hearing, and is available to assist the Committee in any way it can as it continues to examine this issue. This concludes my prepared remarks, and I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.