

City Council Testimony
Nontraditional Employment for Women (NEW)
Amy Peterson, President
Committee on Civil Service and Labor
"Increasing participation in Apprenticeship Programs"

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the Committee. NEW is grateful to the City Council for its continued support of our program. City Council funding for our programs and our City-owned facility have helped NEW to grow substantially in the last few years.

NEW strongly supports New York City apprenticeship programs and the requirement that construction contractors and subcontractors maintain apprenticeship agreements with programs that are registered with and approved by the New York State Department of Labor. By requiring New York City funded construction to use contractors that have agreements with apprenticeship programs, New York City ensures that access to construction jobs are available for women and minorities.

NEW also strongly supports establishing a requirement at or above the level established by the federal government of 6.9 percent for participation of women in the construction trades on City funded construction projects. This will ensure that low-income minority women throughout New York City are given the opportunities to work in the construction trades.

Nontraditional Employment for Women (NEW) prepares women for skilled, unionized jobs in the construction trades. Over the last thirty years, NEW graduates have excelled as tradeswomen - carpenters, electricians, and plumbers, among other trades - in New York City. Building on their success, NEW's goal is to increase the percentage of women in the building and construction trades from three percent to the seven percent goal set by the Federal government in 1978, the year NEW was founded. NEW is working towards this goal in partnership with the building and construction trades unions.

NEW works directly with apprentice directors in the building and construction trades to place women in apprenticeship positions. In 2006, the Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York committed to filling ten percent of first-year apprenticeship slots with women. The New York State Department of Labor approved direct entry into apprenticeship training programs for NEW graduates.

NEW has experienced tremendous growth in the number of women served since the beginning of 2006. In FY05, NEW enrolled 194 women. In FY08, NEW enrolled 419 women, a 100% increase in three years. This growth resulted from the implementation of the recommendations of the Mayor's Commission on Construction Opportunity. Since the approval of direct entry for NEW graduates by the Department of Labor, NEW has placed 425 women in the building and construction trades. NEW doubled the number of women placed in building and construction trades apprenticeship programs from 82 in 2005 to 167 in 2006 after the approval of direct entry.

The following unions are consistently placing NEW graduates in ten percent of the apprentice class slots: New York City District Council of Carpenters (exceeded ten percent); International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 3; International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 3, Elevator Maintenance and Repair Division; Mason Tenders District Council, Local 79; International Union of Painters and Allied Trades, District Council 9; Local 15 Operating

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Engineers; and New York City Plumbers, Local 1. NEW is working closely with all unions to recruit women interested in these trades and to place women in ten percent of their apprentice slots. NEW is working in partnership with construction unions including sheet metal, metal lathers, operating engineers, ornamental and structural ironworkers, and steamfitters.

NEW focuses on skilled, unionized jobs in the blue-collar trades with starting wages averaging \$15 per hour, benefits, and a path to higher-wage employment. These careers provide a real opportunity for women to move into the middle class and support their families. NEW primarily serves low-income minority women.

There are limited opportunities for poor and minority women to obtain secure jobs that provide a living wage and essential benefits, such as health insurance. Eighty-five percent of the women NEW serves identify themselves as minorities. NEW students face many risk factors including histories of domestic violence, histories of substance abuse, criminal records, and lack of stable housing. Many NEW students are low-income New Yorkers who struggle to provide for their families. NEW serves women that are NYCHA residents, have not been employed in the last year, and are receiving public assistance or unemployment insurance benefits. NEW serves women from all five boroughs in New York City and the surrounding counties. NEW students range from age 18 to over 50.

NEW places women in nontraditional careers because of the high wages that give NEW graduates a real opportunity to provide for their families and enter the middle class. In traditional jobs, such as child care workers, hair stylists, home health aides, and housekeepers, women earn in the low to mid \$20,000 range with few to no benefits. Nontraditional careers in construction have average earnings from the mid \$40,000 to the low \$60,000 range plus solid benefits. (USDOL Current Population Survey, 2006. NYS DOL Occupational Employment Statistics, 2007.)

NEW focuses on placing women in the building and construction trades unions apprenticeship programs because of the benefits and opportunities that these positions provide. Women with only a high school diploma or GED and their own initiative can enter the building and construction trades in an entry level position. These women receive training by the apprenticeship program in a skilled trade, they receive critical health and safety training, they are ensured wages equal to the men they work with, they are provided with wages that grow as their skill level grows allowing them to enter the middle class, they receive important health benefits for them and their families, and they receive retirement benefits.

It is critical that the City Council support the requirement that New York City construction contracts be awarded to contractors and subcontractors with agreements with New York State Department of Labor registered apprenticeship programs and establish a requirement at or above 6.9 percent for participation by women in the trades on City-funded construction projects. This will ensure that women from the communities will be able to participate in construction in New York City and earn a living that will allow them to support their families. Through these

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apprenticeship programs, NEW has been able to make a significant difference in the lives of many New Yorkers including:

Connie Bradley- Plumber, Local 1

Connie Bradley graduated from New at Night in August of 2007. With a college degree under her belt, Connie was focused on a blue collar career but found herself relegated to low level maintenance and stocking positions that paid minimum wage. During the program Connie cultivated a passion for plumbing and it was clear that little could stop her from achieving her goal, including caring for her grandmother at home. During the public recruitment for Local 1, she arrived at 4:00am in the morning to obtain an application. This dedication, along with NEW's referral earned Connie a spot in last month's apprentice class with Local 1. She is now working for Par Plumbing. Connie has maintained her relationship with NEW and continues to attend math classes to study for her Grade 1 Apprentice courses as part of NEW's increased retention efforts.

Tyisha Jackson- Carpenter, Local 926

Tyisha Jackson graduated from NEW during the summer of 2007. Tyisha describes herself as a tradeswoman at heart and knew from the time she was a teenager that she wanted to have a hand in building New York City. She shaped jobs and attended public recruitments prior to coming to NEW, but was unsuccessful in securing employment. A mother of three, Tyisha needed a steady job and settled for a series of unfulfilling customer service positions to make ends meet. After finding NEW and successfully completing the day program, Tyisha holds a card with Local 926 of the Carpenters union. She was placed with the Carpenters in January with a group of 19 NEW graduates and is currently working for R&J as a first year apprentice. Tyisha is thrilled to be working and is a passionate advocate of NEW. She continues to participate in recruitment efforts to enroll more women into the program.

These are just two of the hundreds of stories of NEW graduates who have been given opportunities as a result of NEW's partnership with the building and construction trades unions apprenticeship programs.

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**BUILDING &
CONSTRUCTION
TRADES COUNCIL
OF GREATER NEW YORK**

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**TESTIMONY OF
PAUL E. FERNANDES
CHIEF OF STAFF
BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION TRADES COUNCIL OF GREATER NEW YORK**

**OVERSIGHT HEARING ON
EXAMINING HOW TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION IN APPRENTICESHIP
PROGRAMS AS A PATHWAY TO THE TRADE PROFESSIONS**

**COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE AND LABOR**

DECEMBER 16, 2008

Good morning Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. My name is Paul E. Fernandes. I am the chief of staff of the Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York, an organization consisting of local affiliates of 15 national and international unions which represent 100,000 working men and women in the five boroughs.

I am also the president and CEO of The Edward J. Malloy Initiative for Construction Skills, Inc. (formerly Construction Skills 2000), a non-profit organization which provides pre-apprenticeship training to New York City public high school youth, New York City Housing Authority residents and other New York City residents facing economic challenges. This preparatory training leads to direct entry into apprenticeship programs jointly sponsored by unions and contractors in the building and construction industry.



We are pleased to testify at this morning's oversight hearing. Apprenticeship training is the foundation of the unionized building and construction trades. It is effectively our college and university system, where new members of the industry learn the skills needed to compete for long-term employment in the most demanding market in the nation.

Apprentices attend classes funded by the industry while they are also employed on job sites at training wages and benefits that progressively increase over 2-5 years. Upon the completion of apprenticeship training, individuals graduate to journey person, which is the position representing the attainment of the highest skill level and the ability to command commensurate levels of compensation, currently ranging from approximately \$30-40 per hour plus health, pension and other benefits. This apprenticeship training represents the equivalent of a scholarship often worth more than \$20,000 per apprentice. In fact, a number of apprenticeship programs involve course work that is accredited toward the completion of an associate's degree.

In New York City's unionized building and construction industry, there are four routes universally recognized by the industry as the means to access apprenticeship opportunities. First, there are recruitments held by sponsors of these apprenticeship programs. These recruitments are advertised regularly on the web site of the New York State Department of Labor.

We encourage Members of the Committee and the public to learn more about apprenticeship opportunities and these recruitments by visiting www.labor.state.ny.us where they can click "Looking for a Job?" and then click the link on the following page for "apprenticeship opportunities."

Second, there is the Construction Skills program, which recruits public high school youth, NYCHA residents and other New York City residents facing economic challenges for pre-apprenticeship training. Qualified individuals who complete this preparatory training are offered direct entry into union apprenticeship programs. Direct entry allows these individuals to bypass recruitments and waiting lists to obtain expedited placement into apprenticeship programs.

We are pleased to report that the Construction Skills program recently placed its 1,000th individual into a union apprenticeship program this past fall. In addition to this milestone, we are pleased to report that in our eight years of existence, 89% of the individuals we have placed into union apprenticeships have been African American, Hispanic, Asian and other minorities and more than 80% of these individuals have remained actively employed in the industry, with hundreds having graduated to become journey persons.

Third, there is Nontraditional Employment for Women's pre-apprenticeship program to promote apprenticeship opportunities for women. Fourth, there is the Helmets to Hardhats program to promote apprenticeship and other training and employment opportunities for veterans of the U.S. Armed Services. Both of these programs also enjoy direct entry privileges.

Cumulatively, the unionized sector of the industry has reserved up to 40% of available apprenticeship opportunities for qualified referrals from Construction Skills, NEW and Helmets to Hardhats, representing what we believe to be by far the largest such commitment of any industry to provide training and employment opportunities to specific populations of New York City residents.

Notwithstanding the mythology on the demographics of the unionized sector of the industry, the facts quite clearly demonstrate the degree to which our efforts are not merely promoting equal opportunity, but the degree to which our efforts are in fact providing proven successful career outcomes for thousands of minorities and New York City residents. More than half of the 8,000 union apprentices in our industry are African American, Hispanic, Asian and other minorities and more than three-quarters of these union apprentices are New York City residents.

We commend the New York City School Construction Authority, The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the City of New York and NYCHA for adopting procurement policies on their major public works projects requiring contractors and subcontractors to participate in apprenticeship programs.

These policies recognize that the best way to promote apprenticeships as a means to accessing meaningful careers in the building and construction industry is to do business with firms which train and employ apprentices not only on affected public works projects, but on billions of dollars of other public works projects and private projects performed by responsible developers that utilize union labor and contractors throughout New York City and the greater metropolitan area.

What has been lacking, however, is any serious support from government in adopting the same policies across the very wide, multi-billion dollar swath of private work in New York City – including private work that is often generously subsidized by the taxpaying public – where developers and contractors are neither asked nor required to demonstrate their commitment to provide good training and employment opportunities for their building and construction work

force. In fact, on many of these projects, government knowingly turns a blind eye to indications that there may be rather significant violations of applicable laws and standards.

As long as billions of dollars of affordable housing and other private work supported by this Council and others in government continues to be allowed to proceed without any serious consideration of the quality of the training and employment opportunities being offered to the building and construction work force on these projects, there will be no significant potential to realize an increase in apprenticeships as a means to accessing meaningful career opportunities in the industry.

We therefore urge this Committee, the Council and others in government to work with the unionized sector of the building and construction industry to bring standards of accountability to all projects in a manner which will assure that the work force is not only representative of New York City's diverse population, but that the work force truly shares in the benefits of economic development efforts subsidized by their tax dollars.

Thank you.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: JAMES P CONWAY (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 141-57 Northern Blvd

I represent: IUE Local 14

Address: _____

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Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

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Date: _____

Name: JACK KITTRE (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 45 W. 14th ST.

I represent: 10 PAT DC9

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Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: Amy Peterson (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 243 W 20th St

I represent: Nontraditional Employment for Women

Address: _____

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Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. Apprentice Training Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 12/16/08

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Paul Fernandes

Address: 71 W 23rd St NY, NY 10010

I represent: Building & Construction Trades

Address: 71 W 23rd St NY, NY 10010

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Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Mitzan Pelman

Address: 55 Exchange Place, 6th floor

I represent: Citizen Schools

Address: _____

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