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United States Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Department of Labor Fiscal Year 2026 Appropriations for the Employment and Training Administration

Chairman Capito, Ranking Member Baldwin, and Members of the Subcommittee: On behalf of Preservation Action's thousands of members and supporters - representing nearly every state - we appreciate the opportunity to present written testimony on the Department of Labor's FY 2026 Appropriations for the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) and its Apprenticeship programs. Specifically, we recommend the Committee support the following funding levels:

- Employment and Training Administration: Office of Apprenticeship → \$335 million
- Employment and Training Administration: Job Corps → \$1.76 billion

Founded in 1974, Preservation Action is a 501(c)4 nonprofit created to serve as the national grassroots advocacy organization for historic preservation. We represent an active and engaged grassroots constituency from across the country, and this testimony reflects their stated priorities. Key to historic preservation is maintaining and rehabilitating the historic resources that preserve the shared American story for the future. According to a 2022 study, over 40% of buildings in the United States are over 50 years old and the rehabilitation of existing buildings represents \$85 billion in investment each year. This makes up 19% of the building construction industry, employing more than 1.3 million workers. We rely on a skilled workforce in the traditional building trades to rehabilitate the millions of older buildings in the United States.

Many in the building construction industry cite shortage issues with the supply of labor, and this shortage is even more acute in the historic building trades where highly-skilled craftspeople are needed to repair historic buildings. From stonemasons to carpenters and plasterers to stained glass experts, the historic trades are wide-ranging. This is made further pressing that labor constitutes the majority of hard costs in rehabilitation versus new construction where more goes to materials. Numerous federal historic preservation policies and programs promote historic rehabilitation projects that require skilled historic trades craftspeople. Two of the most important federal tools for historic preservation are the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) and the Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit (HTC), which have a proven track record of saving places that Americans value, revitalizing communities, increasing economic development, promoting heritage tourism, and creating jobs.

The HPF and HTC projects require that projects meet quality rehabilitation standards (generally the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation), which need highly-specialized craftspeople. It is estimated that the certified historic rehabilitation work produces 165,000 jobs each year. But demand for this historic trades labor force far exceeds supply. Over 13 million buildings will reach 50 years of age in the next decade, and our industry will need at least 100,000 new historic trades workers to rehabilitate these buildings. Growing this skilled

labor force through the Registered Apprenticeship and Job Corp programs will benefit all Americans, to provide pathways for secure employment, assist owners of historic properties in finding skilled workers, and ensure that precious historic resources are preserved for future generations.

Our historic resources tell the American story. They cannot be outsourced. The work to maintain and care for these resources similarly cannot be off-shored. American history deserves American workers. As we approach America's 250th celebration in 2026, we urge you to support robust funding for the programs that help preserve our unique heritage.

Employment and Training Administration: Office of Apprenticeships

The Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration's Office of Apprenticeship offers a national framework of Registered Apprenticeships and state apprenticeships agencies for earn-and-learn workforce development. Since 2019, the Campaign for Historic Trades program – housed under the nonprofit Preservation Maryland – has worked to add historic trades to this framework. There are now three Registered Apprenticeships Programs specific to historic trades: preservation carpenter, historic window technician, and deconstruction technician. Preservation Maryland recently launched its initial application for apprentices and had to close it after overwhelming response to its capacity. People want to work in these roles and employers want to hire. With these funds, preservation groups like Preservation Maryland can play that important intermediary role to grow the American workforce.

Our industry has worked hard to establish Registered Apprenticeships for the historic trades, and we appreciate the steady support this Committee has shown to the Registered Apprenticeship program.

⇒ Preservation Action supports \$335 million in funding for the Office of Apprenticeship, Registered Apprenticeship program.

Employment and Training Administration: Job Corps

The Job Corps program, administered by the Department of Labor, in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service, provides crucial opportunities for students ages 16-24 to obtain training for meaningful careers. Funding through this program to organizations like HistoriCorps, students engage in hands-on preservation projects at historic sites, such as the Blue Bend Pavillion in West Virginia and the Forrest Lodge in Wisconsin. These collaborations not only impart valuable trade skills but also instill a sense of stewardship for our nation's cultural heritage.

This program serves many of our rural communities and equips individuals with specialized skills but also contributes significantly to the preservation of historic buildings.

Funding for the Job Corps program has been suspended and the President's budget proposes eliminating the program. These cuts are extremely shortsighted. Consistent and robust funding for the Job Corps program is needed more now than ever. Each year the program prepares

thousands of Americans for good paying jobs that don't require a college degree. Eliminating the program would exacerbate the nation's skilled labor shortage, including for the historic rehabilitation industry.

⇒ Preservation Action urges the committee to maintain funding for the Job Corps program at \$1.76 billion.

Conclusion

Preservation Action appreciates the opportunity to provide our views on the FY26 Department of Labor budget. Important programs at the Department of Labor like the Office of Apprenticeship and Job Corps help support a skilled workforce in the traditional building trades. Programs like these are needed more than ever as the historic trades industry is facing a severe labor shortage.

Thank you for valuing the input of the preservation and historic trades community as you consider the FY26 funding levels. We look forward to working with the committee and are happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,



Russ Carnahan

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