



**Commissioner Brad Avakian**  
Bureau of Labor and Industries

**Press Release**

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**Avakian Hears Workforce Priorities from Local Leaders**

*Roundtable on workforce issues draws State Representatives,  
Springfield Schools Superintendent and more*

SPRINGFIELD- State Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian met today with leaders and educators from the Springfield area for a roundtable discussion of workforce development issues. State Representatives Phil Barnhart (D-Eugene) and Terry Beyer (D-Springfield) and Springfield School District Superintendent Nancy Golden were key players in the discussion, that highlighted strategies to improve the workforce development system in Oregon. The event comes as Avakian solicits feedback from communities around the state regarding a coalition proposal to strengthen workforce development efforts and focus on providing workers with the high-skill training necessary to obtain high-wage and high-demand jobs. The group also heard a presentation about the role the new apprenticeship preparation program at Thurston High School is playing in preparing students to enter the workforce.

“Workforce development and training are essential components of successful, economic development efforts in Oregon,” said Avakian. “We need to better prepare Oregon students and workers for high wage, skilled employment and provide job training that is aligned with industry demands and job availability.”

Severe workforce shortages in the construction and manufacturing sectors are projected over the next 10 years. The Oregon Employment Department estimates the construction industry alone will grow by 14.3 percent during this period. When combined with the number of workers set to retire, it is estimated that an additional 30,000 new workers will be needed to fill new construction jobs in the next 10 years. These plumbers, electricians, and millwrights make up the infrastructure of the state’s economy. Ensuring that Oregon workers have the skills necessary to obtain these jobs will ensure Oregon remains competitive in the global market and its workers will have high wage jobs to support a high quality of life.

“Exposing students to apprenticeship opportunities gives them the opportunity to explore possible careers and enhances their skill development. It also establishes a clear connection between education and work,” said Superintendent Nancy Golden. “Programs like this have been shown to increase student motivation and retention by showing the relevance of academic and occupational instruction.”

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*The mission of the Bureau of Labor and Industries is to protect employment rights, advance employment opportunities, and protect access to housing and public accommodations free from discrimination.*

The Apprenticeship Preparation Program, which started this year at Thurston High School (and two other pilot locations), was approved by the 2007 legislature to expose a greater number of high school students to apprenticeship opportunities. Grant funding and technical support is provided by the Bureau of Labor and Industries and is used to create partnerships between local Apprenticeship Training Committees, industry professionals, Lane Community College and Thurston High School to show students the high-wage, high-demand apprenticeship opportunities in manufacturing and construction trades. Students participating in the program receive dual credit from Lane Community College for their coursework.

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