

CO-SPONSORSHIP MEMORANDUM

To: All Legislators

From: Sen. Chris Kapenga

Rep. Dave Maxey and Rep. Adam Neylon

Date: Monday, April 21, 2025

Re: Co-Sponsorship of LRB-2858/1 and LRB-1253/1, relating to: required ratio of journeyworkers to apprentices in apprenticeship programs and contracts.

DEADLINE: Monday, April 28, 2025

According to an August 2024 federal Bureau of Labor Statistics analysis, over 600,000 new skilled construction workers will be needed every year just to keep up with current demand and replace retiring workers. It is expected this need will only increase as the Baby Boomers continue to retire.

For over a century, Wisconsin has been a leader in apprenticeship that allows Wisconsinites to earn while they learn on the way to a family sustaining, lifelong career that cannot be outsourced. In 2024, [Wisconsin announced a record number of apprentices](#), overtaking the previous record in 2023. A large percentage of that total are construction apprentices.

These numbers are impressive, but current law limits the number of apprentices that can begin in a construction apprenticeship program, especially for small businesses. Since 2017, the apprenticeship ratio has been limited to 1:1, meaning that one skilled worker can only supervise one apprentice. Since construction apprenticeships last for three to five years, the current ratio limits the number of apprentices that an employer can train for a career in construction. We have heard from employers in our districts that are fortunate enough to have four or five individuals interested in becoming apprentices, but the ratio only allows two or three to start the program because they currently are employee

apprentices. The others either wait until next year or leave the employer or the construction field.

The state of Michigan provides a solution. There, [the ratio is 2:1 for plumbing apprentices](#) (one skilled plumber can supervise two apprentices), [3:1 for electrical apprentices](#) (one can supervise three), [and no ratio limit for other construction apprentices, including sprinkler fitters](#) (so 1 skilled worker could supervise many apprentices). Michigan data has not shown any correlation between higher apprenticeship ratios and injury rates.

This legislation would take a more measured approach than Michigan. Instead of eliminating the ratio for many trades and having as many as 3:1, the bill would change the ratio for all construction apprentices from 1:1 to 2:1. This change will have no effect on collective bargaining agreements that establish their own apprenticeship ratios.

This legislation will result in more small businesses being able to hire more apprentices that after three to five years will be fully trained to personally address the construction skills gap.

If you are interested in co-sponsoring this legislation, please reply to this email or contact Senator Kapenga's office at 6-9174 or Rep. Maxey's office at 7-9183. All co-sponsors will be added to both versions of the bill unless otherwise specified.

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

Under current law, the Department of Workforce Development may not prescribe, enforce, or authorize a ratio of apprentices to journeyworkers for apprenticeship programs or apprentice contracts that requires more than one journeyworker for each apprentice. This bill increases the allowable ratio to one journeyworker to two apprentices.