



April 30, 2025

Senate Health Committee
Chairman Stephen A. Huffman

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the critical importance of GRIT funding for workforce development and its profound impact on public health in Ohio.

I am Matthew Louanglath, Apprenticeship Director at the Electrical Training Academy and Foundations for the Trades Pre-Apprenticeship Program in Portsmouth, Ohio. Our program serves as a vital workforce development hub serving 10 Counties in southern Ohio, providing life-changing career pathways in the Building Trades.

TRANSFORMING LIVES: HOW GRIT SERVES OHIO'S WORKFORCE

With GRIT's crucial support, our "Foundations for the Trades" Pre-Apprenticeship Program has achieved remarkable outcomes across six essential trades: Bricklayers and Allied Crafts, Sheet Metal Workers, Plumbers and Pipefitters, Operating Engineers, Electricians, and Limited Energy Technicians.

Our results demonstrate GRIT's effectiveness:

- 11 successful cohorts completed with 160 program graduates
- 65 participants transitioned directly into Registered Apprenticeship programs
- 27 completers from underrepresented populations now contributing to our workforce
- 93% placement rate into construction trades employment

These aren't merely statistics—they represent real Ohioans who are moving to self-sufficiency, directly addressing critical public health concerns in our communities.

The connection between employment and health is undeniable. When individuals secure stable, well-paying jobs through our programs, they gain:

- Access to employer-provided healthcare
- Financial stability to afford nutritious food and safe housing
- Reduced stress and improved mental health outcomes
- Pathways away from substance abuse and toward recovery

For individuals in recovery, our programs provide the critical "sense of purpose" identified in the GRIT testimony as essential to reducing recidivism.

MEETING INDUSTRY NEEDS: HOW GRIT SERVES OHIO'S CONTRACTORS

Through supportive services for Pre-Apprentices and Registered Apprentices, GRIT has helped individuals overcome barriers to entering well-paying careers in the trades. This creates a reliable pipeline of qualified workers that contractors can depend on.

Our exceptional 93% placement rate means contractors receive work-ready employees who have been trained to industry standards. This reliable workforce allows contractors to confidently bid on and accept projects, knowing they can deliver with skilled labor.

Contractors also benefit from reduced training costs, as GRIT-supported programs provide workers with foundational skills before they ever reach the jobsite.

POWERING ECONOMIC GROWTH: HOW GRIT SERVES OHIO'S PROJECTS

GRIT funding has enabled our workforce to support major economic development projects including the Honda LG battery plant, Kenworth Truck facility, Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant (Atomic Plant), DuPont, Sofidel, and numerous power plants and solar initiatives.

This economic growth directly translates to improved community health indicators. As Ohio continues to attract major business investments, our ability to provide a skilled construction workforce has become a significant competitive advantage. Without adequate training resources, we risk losing these opportunities to other states, undermining both our economic and public health progress.

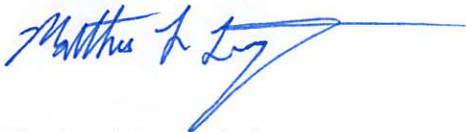
RETURN ON INVESTMENT: A HEALTHIER, STRONGER OHIO

The return on investment is clear: every dollar invested in GRIT translates to reduced healthcare costs, decreased dependency on social services, and stronger, healthier communities throughout Ohio. Our apprentices are taxpaying, contributing members of society who no longer require government assistance.

I respectfully request the Senate Health Committee's support for continued GRIT funding at previous levels, recognizing its essential role in addressing both workforce development and public health challenges in Ohio.

Thank you for your consideration and commitment to the health and prosperity of all Ohioans.

Respectfully submitted,



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Foundations for The Trades