



Commissioner Brad Avakian
Bureau of Labor and Industries

Press Release

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Avakian spotlights high-wage careers in visit with local students

Hillsboro Chamber and local unions partner to offer skilled trade career exploration

WASHINGTON COUNTY—Oregon Labor and Industries Commissioner Brad Avakian today encouraged Washington County high school students to consider careers in the skilled trades at a union apprenticeship career day held at Merlo Station High School. Avakian, the state’s champion for 21st Century shop classes and other hands-on learning, also described a vision for education in Oregon that includes more opportunities for students to gain job skills and explore pathways that don’t lead to a college degree.

“We are on the verge of great new partnerships with local businesses, labor unions and others for equipment and expertise to rapidly broaden our kids’ options,” Avakian said, describing the importance of Oregon’s new Career and Technical Education Revitalization Grant Fund. “Oregon businesses and labor unions consistently tell me they’re ready and willing to help empower our next workforce, and the proof is right here in Washington County in today’s event.”

As Labor and Industries Commissioner, Avakian has championed job skills and career pathway options for all middle and high school students, empowering Oregonians to join the skilled workforce at a younger age and ensuring that Oregon employers have workers with the skills they need right now. The 2011 creation of a statewide grant fund marks a major win for the coalition that Avakian built around public investment in youth skills training, allowing the expansion of successful programs and establishment of new ones in communities around the state.

“You all probably heard that Hillsboro High School had to get private donations to keep a veteran auto shop teacher,” Avakian told the students. “Well, I’m excited that as we start rolling out these grants to support hands-on learning programs around the state, that ‘bake sale’ funding model is going to be replaced with the kind of serious commitment that our state, our employers and our students deserve.”

“Career and technical education is a sound investment with a high rate of return,” Avakian noted. “We can increase engagement in learning for all levels of students, reduce drop-out rates and increase graduation rates, and lay the foundation for a highly skilled, internationally competitive workforce. With a good state policy in place, we can capitalize on the potential of our students, teachers and community partners to build the 21st Century workforce that will drive Oregon’s economic prosperity.”

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