



Commissioner Brad Avakian
Bureau of Labor & Industries

Press Release

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Avakian, Legislators Tour Local Youth Training Program

State Labor Commissioner and local leaders spotlight new local partnership

EUGENE- Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) Commissioner Brad Avakian and Lane County legislators today toured the state-of-the-art training center at the Sheet Metal Institute – Springfield Campus, interacting with students from Bethel, Pleasant Hill and Springfield School Districts who are receiving hands-on experience as part of a new career and technical education partnership between the school districts and local labor unions.

“The collaboration that drives this program is the key to our economic success as a state,” said Avakian, whose top priority as labor and industries commissioner is restoring “21st century shop classes” to every middle and high school in Oregon. “The investment by community partners like organized labor is crucial in ensuring that kids have the skills to take on high-wage jobs at an earlier age, and in ensuring that employers can find the skilled workforce that they need.”

The three local school districts are partnering with Sheet Metal Workers Local 16 immediately, and adding IBEW Local 280, Plumbers and Steamfitters Local 290 and Oregon and Southern Idaho Laborers next year, to create this unique pre-apprenticeship program of study that promotes awareness of high-wage, high-demand careers as well as transferable job skills. Fourteen students were chosen from a much larger pool of applicants to participate in the initial training with the Sheet Metal Workers. BOLI’s high school integration initiative facilitated the formation of the cooperative partnerships that support the program, and BOLI helps to administer the new statewide grant fund that is investing in replicating and expanding programs like the Lane County partnership throughout the state. Interest in and support for that grant fund has been significant, driven in part by broad recognition that Oregon [students have limited options for career and technical education.](#)

“I’m thankful to have so many Oregonians, from educators to employers to organized labor and others in the community, actively engaged in creating these new opportunities for our students,” Avakian added. “Getting high-quality career and technical education options into all of our schools will happen faster, and pay greater dividends, if we work in concert with local employers and community partners—exactly the way this program is working.”

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