



**Testimony**

**of**

**Jacqueline M. Ebanks, Executive Director  
Commission on Gender Equity**

**before the**

**New York City Council Oversight Hearing  
Committees on Civil Service and Labor, Economic Development, and Women and Gender Equity**

**on**

**Gender Diversity in the Trades**

**Tuesday, April 19, 2022  
Virtual Hearing**

Good Morning Chairs Cabán, De La Rosa, and Farías, and members of the Committees on Civil Service and Labor, Economic Development, Women and Gender Equity.

I am Jacqueline Ebanks, Executive Director of New York City's Commission on Gender Equity (CGE). In this role, I also serve as an advisor to the Mayor on policies and issues affecting gender equity in New York City for all girls, women, transgender, and gender non-binary New Yorkers regardless of their ability, age, ethnicity/race, faith, gender expression, immigrant status, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.

After my testimony today, I will be joined by Economic Development Advisor Laura Gibson of the Mayor's Office for Workforce Development; Deputy Commissioner Lucinda Glover of the Workforce Development Division at the Department of Small Business Services; and Claudia Flores, Senior Vice President of Opportunity for Minority, Women and Disadvantaged Business Enterprises at the New York City Economic Development Corporation, to respond to your questions on the critical issue of gender equity and diversity in the trades.

As New York City recovers from the debilitating impacts of COVID-19, the Adams Administration is committed to building an inclusive and equitable economy that is accessible by all New Yorkers regardless of their gender identity or expression. It is within this context that CGE works to remove equity barriers across New York City and carries out its activities across three areas of focus, within a human rights framework and using an intersectional lens. These areas of focus are:

- 1. Economic Mobility and Opportunity.** The goal is to create a City where people of all gender identities and expressions live economically secure lives and have access to opportunities to thrive.
- 2. Health and Reproductive Justice.** The goal is to foster a City free from gender- and race-based health disparities.
- 3. Safety.** The goal is to foster a City free from gender- and race-based violence.

The issue of achieving gender equity and diversity in the trades falls within CGE's work on Economic Mobility and Opportunity. In this portfolio, CGE strives to protect the rights of workers, regardless of gender identity and expression, and to promote equitable employment policies and practices across sectors, including pay equity and sick and parental leave, to name a few.

#### **ADMINISTRATION COMMITMENTS AND ACTIVITIES**

The Adams Administration is committed to an equitable economy that connects New Yorkers to high-quality jobs and in-demand skills, as illustrated by the Mayor's Economic Recovery Blueprint. The Blueprint outlines the City's commitment to providing workers with the supports they need to succeed, from access to childcare and broadband service to stipends for low-income workforce program participants. To do this work, the Adams Administration will collaborate across agencies and sectors to develop and implement targeted programs, amplify opportunities, and facilitate outreach to excluded communities to advance gender equity and diversity in the workplace.

Mayor Adams also recently advocated for important policies at the state level to support working women, including an expanded Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and critical childcare support, and got them. This means EITC secured an increase to the program for the first time in 20 years, adding an additional city investment of \$250 million into the program. This means 800,000 working New Yorkers will now have extra money in their pockets. Under the city's expansion of the EITC, a single parent with one child with an income of \$14,750 will see their benefit increase from \$181 to \$905, a 400 percent increase, and under the state

supplemental payment the EITC benefit will increase from \$1,085 to \$1,357 for this individual. For a married couple with two kids and an income of \$25,000, their benefit will increase from \$299 to \$897 under the city payment, a 200 percent increase. Under the state one-time supplemental payment, their benefit will increase from \$1,794 to \$2,243.

I'll also note that New Yorkers can access the EITC through filing their taxes, and NYC Free Tax Prep is available for most families with low and moderate income across the five boroughs. In just the first part of the 2022 tax season which kicked off in January, NYC Free Tax Prep has helped New Yorkers file more than 41,000 tax returns and save more than \$5 million in fees. New Yorkers can find more information about these services at [www.nyc.gov/taxprep](http://www.nyc.gov/taxprep).

Following Mayor Eric Adams' advocacy, the State also acted and committed \$4 billion in funding to New York City for childcare over four years. And we have also secured authorization for our tax incentives that will spur the private sector in creating 17,000 new childcare seats. It is this type of City-State partnership that will help us address some of the critical issues facing women and families today.

This work builds on recent accomplishments, including a salary history ban, paid sick and safe leave, a paid family leave policy, and the packages of laws known as the "Stop Sexual Harassment in NYC Act", which all combine to create safer workplaces, build greater economic opportunity for New Yorkers, and further advance gender equity in New York City.

## **GENDER EQUITY IN THE TRADES**

The Adams Administration is committed to supporting women, transgender, gender non-binary and nonconforming (TGNBNC) people in the workplace and identifying opportunities for greater support in construction and beyond. Many occupations in the U.S. are marked by disproportionate representation along gender, race, and ethnic lines. Labor market segregation leads to inequity by crowding women and people of color into occupations that offer lower compensation, fewer benefits, and less economic security.<sup>1</sup> Many historical, social, and institutional factors create and perpetuate this segregation, including racism, sexism, gender role stereotypes, and biases within the K-12 and postsecondary education systems. According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, women make up four percent of workers in construction occupations.<sup>2</sup> The lack of gender equity in the trades is just one example of occupational segregation across the labor market.

Yet trade jobs offer enormous opportunities for women, transgender, gender non-binary and nonconforming (TGNBNC) people, and those who identify as LGBTQ+. Trade jobs are often high-paying, with good benefits and union representation<sup>3</sup> and are avenues to economic mobility and security without having to take on the heavy burden of student debt, which is disproportionately held by women.<sup>4</sup> Research from the Center for American Progress found that construction workers, especially those in a union, were better compensated than workers in women-dominated occupations with similar educational requirements, such as childcare workers, service

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/occupational-segregation-in-america/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/A-Future-Worth-Building\\_What-Tradeswomen-Say\\_FINAL.pdf](https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/A-Future-Worth-Building_What-Tradeswomen-Say_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/A-Future-Worth-Building\\_What-Tradeswomen-Say\\_FINAL.pdf](https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/A-Future-Worth-Building_What-Tradeswomen-Say_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.aauw.org/issues/education/student-debt/>

workers, and administrative assistants.<sup>5</sup> Another advantage of working in construction in particular is the relatively low gender pay gap – women who can access construction jobs earn 94.3 percent of what men earn in the same work.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the appeal of trade jobs, there are several challenges that prevent women and TGNBNC people from obtaining and maintaining employment in the trades. These well-documented barriers include racial and gender discrimination, societal norms such as gender role stereotypes, cultural bias, lack of access to childcare and pregnancy accommodations, and negative and unsafe work environments, among others. In a recent national survey of over 2,500 tradeswomen, 44 percent said that they had seriously considered leaving their industry, citing lack of respect and discrimination.<sup>7</sup> Others mentioned lack of pregnancy accommodations as a factor, and workers with young children cited difficulties finding childcare as another potential reason to leave the trades.<sup>8</sup>

Increasing gender equity and diversity in the trades requires addressing these barriers so that women and TGNBNC workers feel welcome to join and remain in the trades, which offer a stable and lucrative career path with positive implications for gender and wage equity. Achieving gender equity will also require unclogging the pipeline to leadership that keeps women and TGNBNC workers from advancing to higher positions in the trades. This work would benefit greatly from more research and data on women and TGNBNC trade workers in New York City to identify and problem-solve around specific inequities. We thank Chairs Cabán, De La Rosa, and Farías, and Council Member Moya for their leadership on this issue.

## **CONCLUSION**

The challenges around achieving gender equity in the trades extends to women’s employment across the labor market, which was severely impacted by the COVID19 pandemic. Millions of women, particularly women of color, sustained job losses or chose to leave the workforce entirely to manage other responsibilities, like caregiving. Yet opportunity lies ahead as New York City begins to recover. We can and will rebuild and refocus on supporting women and TGNBNC New Yorkers in the workforce.

The Adams Administration is committed to ensuring a gender-equitable recovery that promotes gender diversity in all areas of employment, including and especially in the trades. We support the intent of Int. 0179, which proposes to establish a taskforce to examine the role of women in the trades and nontraditional workplaces and look forward to discussing this idea with you further. Thank you having us here today. We are happy to take any questions you may have.

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/infrastructure-bill-must-create-pathways-women-enter-construction-trades/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/infrastructure-bill-must-create-pathways-women-enter-construction-trades/>

<sup>7</sup> [https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/A-Future-Worth-Building\\_What-Tradeswomen-Say\\_FINAL.pdf](https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/A-Future-Worth-Building_What-Tradeswomen-Say_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/A-Future-Worth-Building\\_What-Tradeswomen-Say\\_FINAL.pdf](https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/A-Future-Worth-Building_What-Tradeswomen-Say_FINAL.pdf)



Testimony of Kayt Tiskus (she/her) before  
New York City Council Committees on Civil Service and Labor; Economic Development; and Women &  
Gender Equity  
April 19, 2022

**Who is Pride at Work?**

Pride At Work is a nonprofit organization that represents LGBTQ union members and their allies. We are an officially recognized constituency group of the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor & Congress of Industrial Organizations) that organizes mutual support between the organized Labor Movement and the LGBTQ Community to further social and economic justice. From our national office in Washington, DC, we coordinate and support more than 20 Chapters across the country.

**Who is Bowen Public Affairs Consulting?**

Bowen Public Affairs Consulting was started by activist Andrea (Andy) Bowen in late 2017, with the aim of providing government policy/budget expertise and advocacy for nonprofits and government, all with the broader goal of furthering economic justice. Bowen Public Affairs is dedicated to supporting non-profit organizations and governments in furthering economic justice, from policy articulation to implementation. Andy started her career as a researcher in the Organizing Department of the Ironworkers Union, and continues to work at the intersections of gender and racial equity, and labor justice, primarily in New York City, but with connections to national advocacy.

Thank you, Chairs De La Rosa, Farías, and Cabán, Council Members and all of the staff who put this hearing together. My name is Kayt Tiskus, and I'm the Director of Legislative Strategy and Special Projects of Bowen Public Affairs Consulting, and I'm also a queer woman and activist. I am here to request that the Committees and Council support a proposed new initiative to help LGBTQ+ people into union careers, which we are calling the Pride at Work Initiative. We ask that Council fund this proposed initiative at a range of \$600,000 to \$700,000.

This initiative is meant to bring funded organizations together in a multisectoral approach, with multiple pathways into unionized jobs, focusing on recruitment of LGBTQ+ communities in NYC, and primarily BIPOC LGBTQ+ communities. Overall, we will have the



combined effort of many entities to get LGBTQ+ people into union careers: workforce organizations who maintain strong union affiliations, LGBTQ+ organizations, support from the SEIU 1199 Employment and Training Fund, and an ask from the Department of Citywide Administrative Services to have an LGBTQ+ Liaison to help do hiring halls for LGBTQ+ New Yorkers, and otherwise work to ensure Civil Service is a maximally affirming work environment. DC37 supports that ask, too.

And why *union* employment specifically? LGBTQ+ people, especially BIPOC LGBTQ+ people in NYC, are disproportionately impacted by unemployment, and incomes below 200% of the poverty line. Bowen Public Affairs, especially our principal Andy Bowen, worked with the City over the last few years to create the Unity Works workforce program for LGBTQ+ youth and a manual on LGBTQ+ workplace inclusivity. However, much of the work around LGBTQ+ workforce does not focus adequately on adults, and given the poverty rates and unemployment faced by LGBTQ+ adults, it is clear that we need high-road employment of the sort that we get from our union siblings. I'm happy to answer any further questions, and ask you, Chairs, and your Council colleagues, to support the Pride at Work Initiative with initial funding in FY23 of \$600-\$700,000. Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Statistical considerations:**

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning people, and people of other oppressed sexual orientations and gender identities (LGBTQ+) have, both in New York, and nationally, faced struggles in finding economic stability, and finding work. The most recent LGBT New



York State Health and Human Services Needs Assessment found 36.1% of survey respondents having incomes below 200% of the poverty line, with respondents of color and transgender, gender non-conforming, and non-binary (TGNCNB) respondents even more likely to be below 200% of the federal poverty line ( <https://tinyurl.com/7pxpz7zy> ). Next to that, we know that LGBTQ+ people in New York City face struggles in finding employment. The same needs assessment also found that 11.9% of respondents over the age of 25 were “not employed, in higher education or retired.” TGNCNB people face an even more dire employment situation, with the NYS needs assessment reporting 36.8% of TGNCNB respondents in NYC that they were unfairly not hired (info from custom data request). The most recent US Trans Survey found that, among NYS respondents, “26% of those who held or applied for a job during that year [2015] reported being fired, being denied a promotion, or not being hired for a job they applied for because of their gender identity or expression” (<https://tinyurl.com/yckk9cc4>). There is also evidence that LGBTQ+ people have been particularly impacted by the COVID crisis, , with one report early in the pandemic finding that 66% of LGBTQ+ households have experienced “serious financial problems” (e.g., losing savings, accumulating new debt) during the COVID crisis, compared with 44% of non-LGBTQ+ households, with those problems deeply exacerbated for Black (95% of respondents facing financial problems) and Latinx (70%) respondents ([www.lgbtmap.org/2020-covid-lgbtq-households](http://www.lgbtmap.org/2020-covid-lgbtq-households)).

We’re happy to provide any extra details you seek, and thank you again for your time and consideration. You can reach me at [kayt@bowenpublicaffairs.com](mailto:kayt@bowenpublicaffairs.com).



# **BUILDING & CONSTRUCTION TRADES COUNCIL OF GREATER NEW YORK**

**GARY LaBARBERA**  
PRESIDENT

AFFILIATED WITH THE  
BUILDING CONSTRUCTION TRADES DEPARTMENT  
OF WASHINGTON, DC  
—  
BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION TRADES COUNCIL  
OF NEW YORK STATE  
—  
AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR OF CONGRESS  
OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATION

## TESTIMONY

On behalf

**BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION TRADES COUNCIL OF GREATER NEW YORK AND  
VICINITY**

New York City Council Hearing

April 19, 2022

Good morning. I am Santos Rodriguez, testifying today on behalf of Gary LaBarbera, President of the Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York & Vicinity (referred to herein as the “BCTC”).

The Building and Construction Trades Council is an organization of local building and construction trade unions that are affiliated with 15 International Unions in the North American Building Trades Union. Our local union affiliates represent approximately 100,000 union construction workers. The Building Trades mission is to raise the standard of living for all workers, to advocate for safe work conditions and to collectively advance working conditions for our affiliates’ members, as well as all workers in New York City. With the goal of advancing working conditions and raising standards for all construction workers, the BCTC has successfully advocated for safety legislation before this council, wage theft legislation in Albany, and wage standards on certain construction projects that would benefit all workers regardless of union status, regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, or gender.

Membership in a labor union is the best way of ensuring that workers are treated equally. Under a collective bargaining agreement, workers are paid based upon the trade work that they perform. Employers do not get to randomly decide how they will compensate workers. If you are a plumber performing construction on a new commercial development, you receive the same wages and benefits as every other plumber performing construction on a new commercial development. The collective bargaining agreement requires this. Your employer cannot decide to pay you less because of your race, sexual orientation or gender. There is no similar protection for non-union workers on private construction projects. There is no similar mechanism for enforcing such requirements without a labor union.

Additionally, the BCTC, its affiliated Unions, and their signatory contractors invest heavily in recruitment and training. To this end we work closely with the Apprenticeship Readiness Collective, a group of four separate pre-apprentice programs that recruit individuals across various demographics in New York City, provide entry level skills, and ultimately direct entry into an apprenticeship program for a union construction trade. These four programs are:

- 1) The Edward J. Malloy Initiative for Construction Skills (CSkills), which recruits participants from New York City Schools;



- 2) Nontraditional Employment for Women (NEW), which focuses its recruitment on women;
- 3) New York Helmets to Hardhats (H2H), which focuses recruitment on veterans; and
- 4) Pathways to Apprenticeship (P2A), which recruits justice involved individuals.

While each of these four programs target separate communities for recruitment, there are no eligibility requirements or restrictions for participation in any of these programs based on gender, except for NEW, which focuses specifically on women and non-binary. Notably women and non-binary, can and do participate in CSkills, H2H and P2A.

Graduates from these programs are provided direct entry into a construction union apprenticeship program. These programs provide these individuals with much more than a job, it provides them with the skills and base of support to begin a career in the construction industry where they can earn family sustaining wages and benefits. Established programs like these simply do not exist in the non-union sector of the construction industry. Efforts and diverse recruitment aiming to improve the lives of workers and provide them career opportunities do not exist in the non-union sector. There is no voice for workers in the non-union sector, you're likely to hear more about the plight of non-union contractors.

The only way to guide a participant through a pre-apprentice program, to an apprentice program, and ultimately into a career in construction is by working tirelessly to secure future work opportunities for these individuals. Our Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) ensure that work performed on a specific project utilizes union labor. This allows our affiliated Unions to place the maximum amount of apprentices allowed by law on a project. Where there is no PLA, there is no guarantee that apprentices will have a place to complete the field work portion of the apprenticeship program. Where a project does not utilize union contractors, there are no apprentices working, learning, or growing on that project period.

The BCTC and its affiliated Unions are doing what we can to increase diversity in the trades, including providing opportunities for more women and non-binary individuals to enter the trades. We are increasing recruitment efforts, working closely with pre-apprentice programs, and seeking to secure PLAs to ensure there are work opportunities for these individuals. The number of individuals that can be recruited into a pre-apprenticeship program or apprenticeship program is tied to the amount of work a trade can project it will have to perform in the future. The more work opportunities trades have, the more recruitment opportunities are available. Any one construction project will eventually end, we are working on securing a pipeline to make sure those workers, and new workers, will continue to have employment opportunities after that one project is complete.

We need to make sure these opportunities continue to present themselves so that we can continue to recruit, train, and prepare tomorrow's construction workers. We should all want the workers building our bridges, preparing our roads, rehabilitating our airports, constructing high rise buildings in Manhattan and low-rise apartment buildings in the boroughs where our neighbors will live and raise their families to be built by a highly trained and skilled workforce that feels secure in their employment and career.

We thank you for this opportunity to testify here today.



## **Testimony of Siera Nezaj, Director, Communications and Grant Writing, Building Skills NY**

### **NYC Council Committees on Women & Gender Equity, Civil Service & Labor, and Economic Development**

**April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

Building Skills NY (BSNY) is a nonprofit construction workforce development organization that connects underemployed New Yorkers to construction jobs throughout New York City. BSNY works with prospective participants in underemployed communities to connect them with industry-recognized training and credentials and place them into meaningful employment. We thank the Committees for the opportunity to testify as part of the oversight of Gender Diversity in the Trades and the creation of the Taskforce on Women in Nontraditional Employment.

Only about 10 percent of payroll employees in the New York City construction industry are women, ranking 25th among big cities and falling below the national average of 13 percent. This number has remained relatively stagnant since the 1990s, according to a 2020 analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics Data. To combat this disparity, BSNY supports the creation of the Taskforce on Women in Nontraditional Employment (Francisco Moya T2022-0656). We propose working with the Council to place more women into construction jobs; we are certain our experience uniquely positions us to advocate for women in construction and tackle issues that lead to challenges with recruitment and retention of women, sustained negative work environments for women, issues impacting how these environments value diversity, equity and inclusion, and other significant barriers to success for women in nontraditional workplaces. BSNY has worked with Councilmembers Brooks-Power, Riley, and Ayala, among others, to connect their constituents to viable construction jobs through job fairs, referral partners, and district office services.

Currently, BSNY is consistently working to not only recruit more women for our programming and place more women into meaningful employment, but also encourage the women we already work with to remain confident and take charge of their careers despite unequal representation in the construction industry. We encourage women to build careers in construction by facilitating all-female OSHA 30 and Site Safety Training cohorts as part of our Construction Career Accelerator program, highlighting mothers in construction throughout May to celebrate Mother's Day, and inviting women who BSNY has placed into employment to speak to our current





construction skills training cohorts. BSNY also connects women to advanced training like 4-Hr Scaffolding, Flagger, HVAC, F-60, and G-60 training to earn additional credentials that will lead to career advancement and wage growth. In the future we plan to honor multiple women in construction at an upcoming BSNY event, where they will be given the opportunity and platform to speak to their experience in the construction industry.

Additionally, while women who work in construction are more likely to work in an office setting, 88 percent of the women BSNY places into employment work directly on-site including positions like general labor, carpentry, electrical, and HVAC. The average initial hourly rate of women BSNY has placed into employment has risen steadily. In addition, BSNY has placed over two dozen women in multiple jobs since 2020, showing we are not only committed to being an entry point to the construction industry for women, but to helping women advance their careers and be a resource for upward mobility, including potential opportunities into pre-apprenticeship programs and unionized building trades. Our goal is to encourage the women we serve to build viable careers in construction they are proud of.

Thank you for your consideration of these points.

#### Contact

Siera Nezaj  
*Director, Communications and Grant Writing*  
**Building Skills NY**  
646.973.1526  
snezaj@buildingskillsny.org



570 Lexington Avenue, Floor 2, New York, NY 10022  
212-776-4149 • [www.buildingskillsny.org](http://www.buildingskillsny.org) • [info@buildingskillsny.org](mailto:info@buildingskillsny.org)



## TESTIMONY

On behalf of

**THE EDWARD J. MALLOY INITIATIVE FOR CONSTRUCTION SKILLS**  
**New York City Council Hearing on Gender Diversity in the Trades**

Good morning. My name is Talisa Smith, I serve as Program Director of The Edward J. Malloy Initiative for Construction Skills (CSKILLS). I am testifying today on behalf of Nicole Bertran, Executive Vice President of CSKILLS.

Construction Skills is a not-for-profit corporation that administers an apprenticeship readiness program for New York City public high school seniors and adult residents seeking careers in the unionized construction industry. Our apprenticeship readiness program offers a nationally recognized curriculum, the Multi-Craft Core Curriculum (MC3), and leads to direct entry access to apprenticeship programs jointly sponsored by union affiliates of the Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York (BCTC).

Since 2001, Construction Skills has contributed to the development of a skilled and trained workforce by recruiting, training, and placing residents of New York City into apprenticeship programs jointly sponsored by union affiliates of the BCTC. To date, Construction Skills has placed 2,350 New York City residents into union apprenticeship programs. Our participants live in all five boroughs of New York City, 89 percent of these participants identify as members of a minority community, and 80% remain active in the industry today working as apprentices and journeypersons.

The success of Construction Skills can be attributed to the commitment to diversity and inclusion of the BCTC and its affiliates. In 2020, after years of side-by-side collaboration, the four workforce development organizations formally endorsed by the BCTC have united to form the Apprenticeship Readiness Collective (ARC). ARC is a horizontal collective intended to coordinate services and raise the profile of direct entry programs in New York City. Its affiliates include Construction Skills (CSKILLS),



Nontraditional Employment for Women (NEW), Helmets to Hardhats (H2H), and Pathways to Apprenticeship (P2A). Each ARC affiliate stands ready with the skills and expertise to provide direct entry access to family-sustaining careers in the unionized construction industry that offer high wages, training and education, health benefits, and retirement security.

ARC affiliates provide apprenticeship readiness and placement services to New Yorkers largely in response to the construction industry's demand for labor. Projects built using union labor mean more opportunity for new and existing workers to access these family-sustaining careers. One of the ways the Council can support New Yorkers seeking these careers is to help to ensure that work performed on projects in the five boroughs utilizes union labor. More union jobs will create more opportunities for New Yorkers served by ARC affiliates.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

## **Gender diversity in the trades by Lowely Cheung**

Good morning, everyone, my name is Lowley Cheung, IBEW Local 3 Journeywoman and Nontraditional Employment for Women - NEW graduate.

Thank you to the Speaker Adrienne Adams, Deputy Speaker Diana Ayala, Chair Tiffany Caban, the Council Members of the Committee on Women and Gender Equity and the Staff who put this hearing together.

40 years ago, I came to this country hoping to find the American dream of upward mobility. I followed the script and invested my time and energy in higher education. My first degree was in Toys Design and I was working as a model maker for toy companies. However, my job got outsourced to China. At that time I got paid \$15 an hour; in China, the labor got \$15 a day. There was no competition and no future in that career.

So I went back to college again and got another degree, this time in Computer graphics. I could only find freelance jobs without health insurance nor benefits. During the Great Recession of 2008, there was no work. The recession dragged on for years.

In 2011, I was 46 years old with a few thousand dollars in my bank account.

I can't afford to buy a house, I can't afford to go on vacation. I can't afford to get sick.

Also in 2011, I passed NEW building and saw a group of women carrying construction materials around. I never knew that a woman could be a construction worker. I signed up with NEW.

In 2022, I started my apprenticeship with Local union #3 and learn to become an electrician.

5 and a half years later, at age 52, I became a journeywoman. Thanks to my union, I have pensions, 401-K, health benefits and a bank account with a year of emergency fund. I enjoy a middle class life, and my family benefits from a good union wage too. I can support my nieces to go to college. One is studying in Buffalo U and another is in Stony Brook university.

Thanks to NEW, doors are open to women in different trade unions. Men and women in the union get the same pay. Also, only in a union, a person like me, an older minority woman can still have the chance to learn a trade and live the American dream.

We women from NEW are willing to work hard to better our lives. Please provide jobs to unions, so we tradeswomen can work.

I am grateful for the time today and look forward to working with you all in the future to support the tradeswomen of New York City. Providing jobs to unions is the same as providing jobs to tradeswomen.

Thank You.

**JOINT HEARING ON WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION**  
**WOMEN & GENDER EQUITY, CIVIL SERVICE & LABOR AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**  
**APRIL 19, 2022, 10 AM**

**Issue:** Worker misclassification and women in construction

Good morning, Chairs De La Rosa, Caban, and Farias. My name is Silvia Salazar. I am a union Laborer and member of Laborers' Local 1010. Laborers' Local 1010 is an affiliate of the New York City Building and Construction Trades Council. I work in the field doing heavy-highway construction, road paving, and work in New York City parks.

I am speaking today to share my experience as an organizer, speaking with non-union workers, particularly immigrant women and Women of Color who are being misclassified as crossing guards on worksites that otherwise pay the prevailing wage. As you may know, there are construction projects in NYC that are taxpayer funded and therefore covered by prevailing wage laws. These laws guarantee that all workers working on the jobsite be paid fair wages, the prevailing wage. The prevailing wage is the wage and benefit rate set annually by the New York City Comptroller for each trade or occupation for employers performing public works projects and building service work on New York City government-funded work sites.

The women and workers I have spoken to report being classified as "crossing guards" and are paid between \$12- \$15 dollars an-hour, while the other workers on the job are being paid over \$90 an hour, which includes hourly wage, benefits, and health insurance, AND the representation of the Laborer's union.

These flaggers are not unionized and report making substandard wages with no health care or retirement benefits. Being classified correctly would mean these workers could become LIUNA members and receive family-sustaining wages, health care, and retirement benefits, like myself.

These workers are NOT crossing guards, but instead construction workers that work on New York City's dangerous streets and highways. This workers must be recognized for their true classification as a construction worker and the prevailing wage must be paid to all workers at

the rate of the trade classification as per the New York City Comptroller.

Over the past several decades ALL workers were paid prevailing wages in road construction projects. Today, some city agencies and utility companies hire-third-party contractors who misclassify workers who protect workers and pedestrians on our infrastructure projects. These non-union companies have set out to exploit NYC workers, most of these workers are NYC residents that are women, recently immigrated and/or Women of Color.

Flaggers on construction sites are mandated by law to be paid prevailing wages. They are an important part of any road construction project. These workers are being misclassified and therefore are being paid a lower rate.

**We call on the help of the NYC Council to ensure construction workers doing Laborers' work are classified as such and paid the prevailing wage when working on taxpayer funded infrastructure projects. Thank you.**



# UNITED BROTHERHOOD OF CARPENTERS AND JOINERS OF AMERICA

## NEW YORK CITY & VICINITY DISTRICT COUNCIL OF CARPENTERS

JOSEPH A. GEIGER  
Executive Secretary - Treasurer

PAUL CAPURSO  
President /Asst EST

DAVID CARABALOSO  
Vice President Pro Tem /Asst EST



395 HUDSON STREET - 9<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR

NEW YORK, N.Y. 10014

PHONE: (212) 366-7500

FAX: (212) 675-3118

[www.nycdistrictcouncil.com](http://www.nycdistrictcouncil.com)

My name is Megan Wylie and I serve as the Deputy Political Director for the New York City & Vicinity District Council of Carpenters. Thank you to Chairs de la Rosa, Cabán, and Farías for holding this important hearing that addresses an issue close to my heart; both as part of a union working to fix an industry-wide gender gap, and as a woman in a predominantly male field.

On behalf of our 20,000 members who live and work in New York City, I am proud to speak on the importance of increasing pathways for women in the construction trades, as well as in support of Council Member Moya's bill, Intro 0179, which would create a task force to evaluate and report on female representation in the trades.

The District Council of Carpenters is dedicated to making sure our union resembles the diversity of the city we work in and to ensuring that New Yorkers from all paths of life have access to the life-changing opportunities and benefits that come with being in a union. Our efforts surrounding gender diversity in the District Council of Carpenters consists of two branches: recruiting women previously unexposed to construction jobs and working to improve the retention rate of female apprentices and journeymen.

With a set number of slots and a randomized lottery selection system for apprentices, the ability to compensate for the gender gap is far too limited. This is why Nontraditional Employment for Women (NEW), a direct entry program focused on recruiting low-income women, transgender and non-binary individuals, is particularly vital to developing a pipeline for underrepresented communities. Since 1978, NEW has placed women in over 3,000 industry careers, 700 of which were with the NYCDCC. We urge the City Council to continue to fund NEW through the Young Women's Leadership Development and Job Training and Placement Initiatives.

As stated, however, recruitment is only half of the battle. Many women who enter our apprenticeship program drop out within 5 years, and we have made it our mission to identify the causes of this trend and how to fix it. In the past two years, we have specifically focused on our mentoring program, Sisters in the Brotherhood (SIB). The SIB program consists of approximately 800 members of the NYCDCC that focuses on building a community and support network for women in the union, through regular meetings, trips to our training center in Las Vegas with chapters of SIB from across North America, and other initiatives.

Thank you to the Committees on Civil Service & Labor, Women & Gender Equity, and Economic Development for allowing me to let me speak on the ways in which the District Council is working to increase the number of women in our union. We are grateful to work with so many Council Members to ensure we are fostering opportunities for constituents in every district, and we look forward to a day when the construction trades no longer are a nontraditional path for women.



**Nontraditional Employment for Women (NEW)**  
**Testimony for the Oversight Hearing: Gender Diversity in the Trades on April 19, 2022**  
**Presented to the Council of the City of New York and the Committees on Civil Service**  
**and Labor, Economic Development, and Women and Gender Equity**

Kathleen Culhane, President, NEW  
Kate Krug, Executive Vice President, NEW  
Sinade Wadsworth, Journey level Carpenter, New York City District Council of Carpenters,  
NEW Graduate  
Lowley Cheung, Journey level Electrician IBEW Local 3, NEW Graduate

---

Thank you to the Speaker Adrienne Adams, Deputy Speaker Diana Ayala, Chair Tiffany Caban Chair Amanda Farias and Chair Carmen De La Rosa, and the Council Members of the Committee on Women and Gender Equity, Economic Development, and Civil Service and Labor and the Staff who put this hearing together. I also thank Council Members Moya, Caban, Stevens, and Farias for sponsoring Intro 0179, legislation to create a task force to better understand the role of women in nontraditional spaces and how we can support them.

As we celebrate the Council's first women-majority, NEW is committed to working with our legislators to identify opportunities – through programs and policy – to bring gender equity to our workforce.

When it comes to addressing gender inequality in the labor market, unions make the biggest impact. Union representation brings wage setting into the open and helps ensure that employers set wages based on objective criteria, such as skill, effort, and responsibility. New York City building and construction trade unions are dedicated to fair schedules, fair wages, access to health and childcare, and paid leave for all working families and women. These careers offer financial security, with starting wages of \$19 per hour leading towards a pathway to middle class wages and benefits through their union, opening doors to stability and resources for women and their families. The Bureau of Labor Statistics finds that unionized women make on average 23% more than women without a union.

Women, particularly Black and brown women, are most impacted by economic crises. As you know, Women account for up to 54% of coronavirus-related job losses. In some months of 2020, Black and brown women accounted for all net job losses. NEW offers a holistic, career-oriented solution. NEW prepares, trains, and places low-income women in careers in the skilled construction, utility, and maintenance trades, helping women achieve economic independence and a secure future for themselves and their families. At the same time, NEW provides a pipeline of qualified workers to the unionized industries of New York City.

The pandemic has laid bare the disproportionate burdens placed on women and the lack of resources dedicated to their needs. The workforce ecosystem in New York City needs stronger economic support to help New Yorkers facing employment barriers and those with impeded access to economic opportunities, especially New Yorkers from communities that have been historically marginalized and disinvested, like the low-income black and brown women and women facing childcare concerns - women that NEW supports and serves.

This has been paralleled by an increased need and demand for workforce services from both New Yorkers and employers, and small businesses. NEW will leverage its 44 years of vital work preparing low-income women for high-paying careers in the skilled trades and provide wrap around services such as increasing access to childcare.

Through our programs we offer students no-cost, comprehensive training in both the hard and soft skills needed to thrive in a trade career. Women like NEW Graduate, Lowely Cheung, Journey level Electrician who shared her NEW story with the Council of the City of New York on April 19th:

40 years ago, I came to this country hoping to find the American dream of upward mobility. I followed the script and invested my time and energy in higher education. My first degree was in Toy Design, and I was working as a model maker for toy companies. However, my job was outsourced to China. At that time, I got paid \$15 an hour; in China, the labor got \$15 a day. There was no competition and no future in that career.

I went back to college again and got another degree, this time in Computer graphics. I could only find freelance jobs without health insurance nor benefits. During the Great Recession of 2008, there was no work. The recession dragged on for years.

In 2011, I was 46 years old with a few thousand dollars in my bank account. I can't afford to buy a house; I can't afford to go on vacation. I can't afford to get sick.

In 2011, I passed NEW building and saw a group of women carrying construction materials around. I never knew that a woman could be a construction worker. I signed up with NEW.

In 2022, I started my apprenticeship with Local union #3 and learn to become an electrician.

5 and a half years later, at age 52, I became a journeywoman. Thanks to my union, I have pensions, 401-K, health benefits and a bank account with a year of emergency fund. I enjoy a middle-class life, and my family benefits from a good union wage too. I can support my nieces to go to college. One is studying in Buffalo University and another is in Stony Brook University.

Thanks to NEW, doors are open to women in different trade unions. Men and women in the union get the same pay. Also, only in a union, a person like me, an older minority woman can still have the chance to learn a trade and live the American dream.

We women from NEW are willing to work hard to better our lives. Please provide jobs to unions, so we tradeswomen can work.

To enter a lucrative and sustainable field like construction, women must have access to resources that address their specific needs in the industry. Since 1978, NEW has been a groundbreaking model that works for women and for New York City. Through our programs we offer students no-cost, comprehensive training in both the hard and soft skills needed to thrive in a trade career including advanced training programs, an expanded employer base, wrap around social services including our nontraditional childcare pilot program in partnership with the North American Building Trade Unions, and a growing number of opportunities available to women through those employers.

We envision a future where women are equally provided with the skills and opportunities needed to succeed in construction trades career. NEW believes that equitable economic opportunities for tradeswomen means increasing union construction projects in New York City as well as creating stability and efficiency of long-term construction by advocating for diversity goals on projects.

More than 82 percent of individuals accessing NEW's services identify as a minority, additionally 80 percent come from low-income backgrounds and are underemployed working minimum wage jobs, with 75 percent receiving some form of public assistance such as SNAP or TANF. Construction trade careers increase the lifetime earning potential for a woman with a high school equivalency by 166 percent compared to other minimum wage jobs.

Gender equity is a critical societal and economic issue and unions can help eliminate gender inequalities in the labor market. We ask the administration today to increase awards for union contracts in New York City and thereby increasing the number of employment opportunities for tradeswomen. NEW also eager is to provide support for the Local Law proposed today in relation to creating a task force to examine the role of women in nontraditional workplaces, an area that we have decades of expertise to share.

We are grateful for the time today spent with all of you and look forward to working with you all in the future to support the tradeswomen of New York City.