



Re: Support for Youth Workforce Development in the Trades

February 24, 2026

Co-Chair Baker, Co-Chair Pinto, and members of the Workforce, Labor and Economic Development Finance and Policy Committee,

On behalf of Housing First Minnesota, I am writing to express our strong support for legislative initiatives that expand workforce development opportunities for Minnesota's youth — particularly in the skilled trades.

Housing First Minnesota is a statewide trade association representing builders, remodelers, developers, and industry partners dedicated to advancing homeownership, supporting the residential construction industry, and promoting policies that help Minnesota build the housing our communities need. Our members are committed to workforce development efforts that strengthen the construction talent pipeline and expand access to meaningful career pathways.

We support efforts such as House File 2238 (and companion youth workforce legislation) that direct state leadership to approve and scale youth skills training programs, especially those centered on construction and the building trades.

Minnesota faces both a significant housing shortage and a critical shortage of skilled workers in the construction and trades sectors.

Expanding youth access to relevant skills training and safe, structured work experiences is a key step toward building a workforce that can help address these challenges. Programs that allow 16- and 17-year-old students to receive hands-on training, industry-recognized safety certifications, and real-world work experience in supportive environments connect young people with meaningful careers while helping employers cultivate the next generation of skilled professionals.

Housing First Minnesota supports these workforce pathways for several reasons:

- **Economic opportunity for young people:** Early exposure to the trades provides clear pathways to well-paying, in-demand careers and long-term economic mobility, especially for students who may not pursue a traditional four-year college route.
- **Strengthening Minnesota's workforce:** Structured training and youth employment opportunities build capacity in critical sectors like residential construction, which is essential to meeting housing demand across the state.



- **Housing stability and economic growth:** A strong construction workforce is foundational to addressing Minnesota's housing shortage and supporting vibrant, growing communities.
- **Safe, structured learning environments:** Thoughtfully designed legislation ensures that youth receive proper training, supervision, and safety protections while gaining valuable skills and experience.

We urge you to support House File 2238 and related measures that expand youth training and employment pathways in the skilled trades. These investments will help prepare the next generation of Minnesota's workforce, strengthen our housing industry, and expand opportunity for young people across the state.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Foster". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mark Foster,
Vice President, Legislative & Political Affairs
Housing First Minnesota

