

HF 1310 Support Testimony from Aung Myo Way

Dear Chair, Rep. Jay Xiong, Vice Chair, Rep. Jeff Brand and members of the MN House Workforce and Development Finance and Policy Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to explain how Youthbuild changed my life, and why I support on HF 1310.

My name is Aung Myo Way and I am 30 years old. I was born in Myanmar, my country has been ravaged by war since 1948. When I was 5 years old I have to flee my village because the Burmese army came and burned it down. I was forced to move to Thailand and live in a refugee camp.

My life was so hard in the refugee Camp. I was living in a wooden box that was hardly bigger than a dog house. We barely had enough food, we always ate every last grain of rice and any insect or animal we could find. I lived in the refugee camp for about 15 years. Those were the hardest years of my life. We had some school in refugee camp, but our education was very poor. When was 19 years old I had a big opportunity to move to America. It was a bitter sweet moment because I was told I had to leave with only my young twin sisters and leave my whole family, friends and country behind.

When I first came to America I could barely speak English. I had a lot of problems, even going shopping was very difficult. The worst part was transportation and finding a job. America was very difficult to survive without good English skills and having no job experience. After about two years I heard about the Youthbuild program. They helped me improve my English skills and I gained experience in construction. In the Youthbuild program I learned about building houses and leadership. Youthbuild has produced a lot of good workers for the Union trades and other occupations. As an Immigrant Youthbuild program has been a very import part of my life.

In Youthbuild I got my high school diploma and job skills that improved my life so much. I hope that more young people can join Youthbuild because it changed my life. I was working in a low paying job and I did not have a stable place to live. I myself have recommended many youth to join the program to improve their lives. My life has changed so much since I joined Youthbuild. Today I make more than \$40/hr. as a Journeyman in the union, and I own my own home. I owe all my success to the Youthbuild program and I hope you will support them with increased funding for other young people like me. .

