



Testimony Michael Prohaska, Mason Tenders District Council
Hearing FY24 Budget Labor Hearing
Topic Housing Compact
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Hello, my name is Michael Prohaska. I'm the Business Manager of the 17,000-member Mason Tenders District Council of Greater New York (MTDC) which encompasses Laborers Locals 66, 78, 79 and 108 in New York City and Long Island. Laborers build New York from the ground up and are involved in all facets of construction. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the FY24 budget.

Governor Hochul has put forth a bold budget that includes raising the minimum wage and the Housing Compact proposal with the goal of creating 800,000 new homes by 2030. The MTDC is supportive of both policies but with nuance that will better support the working people each policy will impact.

Our union is one rooted in labor activism and organizing – not just for our members, but all workers in New York State. We know our role in fighting for the vulnerable worker, being a voice for the voiceless, and working to raise standards for all workers. This fight is an arduous but noble one to make sure an honest day's work earns an honest day's pay, and no worker fears whether or not they'll return home at the end of the day or face mistreatment on the job.

A key tenet of this work is setting strong wages to ensure economic prosperity not just for our members, but also for their families and the communities they call home. That's why this year we're building on our work on the Fight for \$15 to support Assembly Member Joyner and Senator Ramos' legislation (A2204/S1978) to raise the minimum wage to \$20 and index it to inflation. We were glad to see the Governor include a policy to raise the minimum wage in her FY24 budget but believe it fails to meet the needs of New Yorkers and the current economic realities we're facing. Inflation is at record levels, many are still getting back to work and recovering from COVID-19 job loss, making the need for wage justice - like A2204/S1978 will implement – more necessary than ever.

The Housing Compact has the potential to be a historic policy achievement. Governor Hochul knows firsthand the security, stability and prosperity of growing up in a union household. Current and future generations of local workers should have access to the same security and economic mobility – and through the Housing Compact, they can. With robust wage



requirements and the use of New York State certified apprenticeship programs, the construction of these 800,000 homes can move thousands of New Yorkers into the middle class through careers in the unionized Building Trades. Without adding labor standards like prevailing wages and benefits, responsible contractor and project labor agreements to the Compact, the jobs created are likely to be short-term, minimum wage jobs with no healthcare, retirement security, or career path. Additionally, if we fail to add labor standards to the policy, it will fall far short of providing the safe, skilled workforce that an undertaking of this scope requires. It will also sell short the communities around the housing construction sites, which benefit from fairly-compensated workers spending wages locally, money that is reinvested and spurs broader economic growth.

It's also vital to add these labor standards as a tool to grow the labor movement in New York. The Housing Compact includes a targeted New York City community hiring policy and adding these standards will ensure those that secure jobs through the residential developments aren't entering into low road employment opportunities. Coupled with the labor standards, the local hiring policy can create a pathway into careers in the unionized Building Trades for communities long unable to access and disenfranchised from these opportunities.

The Housing Compact and minimum wage increase are policies that if properly crafted can uplift New Yorkers with both affordable housing and good jobs. Together, these policies can grow communities and economic prosperity. On behalf of the hardworking members of the Mason Tenders District Council, we urge you to add robust, enforceable labor standards to the Housing Compact and raise the minimum wage to \$20 and then index it to inflation. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today.