



April 24, 2025

**RE: The End of the Lemonheads Program – A Step Backward for Workforce Development**

To our Members and Education Partners,

It is with deep frustration and disappointment that I write to inform you of the end of a program that has meant so much to our industry, our community, and most importantly, our students.

With the passage of House Bill 1644, the Lemonheads program is officially dead.

Let me be clear—we have always, and will always, support laws that protect worker safety, especially for minors. But HB 1644 does not advance safety. Instead, it sends a message loud and clear: do not hire minors if you are a public works contractor. The new law's punitive approach—including a provision that prohibits any contractor who loses a minor work permit from bidding on public projects—puts responsible contractors in an impossible position.

No contractor should be forced to choose between mentoring the next generation and preserving their livelihood. And I will not, in good conscience, ask our members to take that risk.

For that reason, I am advising all AGC members to refrain from hiring workers under the age of 18 on any project. Not because we don't believe in them—we absolutely do—but because this legislation makes it too dangerous to do so. The risk to a contractor's business is simply too great.

This decision is especially painful for the many family-owned businesses that make up our membership. These are companies where sons, daughters, nieces, nephews, and employees' kids have traditionally been welcomed onto job sites—not just to work, but to learn, to grow, and to be part of something bigger. These were often the first job opportunities that built confidence, skills, and pride. Now, those doors are shut.

What's most troubling is that this bill will not keep minors safer. In fact, it's likely to have the opposite effect. Students who are interested in construction will now be left to find work with contractors who do not participate in public works—often in residential markets where safety oversight is far less rigorous. We've taken them out of highly structured, regulated, and mentored learning environments and sent them to employers who may not be equipped—or motivated—to provide the same protections.

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**Your Voice in the Construction Industry**

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This is a heartbreaking loss for the students who saw construction as a path to a promising career. It is a loss for schools who believed in building CTE programs that connected learning to real-world opportunity. And it is a loss for our industry, which continues to face a serious and growing workforce shortage.

To our members and partners—I thank you for your past support of programs like Lemonheads. I know this is not where any of us wanted to be. We will continue to advocate for smarter, more balanced workforce policies, and we remain committed to creating opportunities for young people wherever and however we can.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cheryl Stewart". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Cheryl" and last name "Stewart" clearly distinguishable.

Cheryl Stewart  
Executive Director  
Inland Northwest Associated General Contractors

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