Labor Commissioner Hoyle submits comment opposing new federal apprenticeship rule

Trump Administration proposal would weaken apprenticeship standards and oversight

Oregon Labor Commissioner Val Hoyle submitted formal public comment on Wednesday to the U.S. Department of Labor and Acting Labor Secretary Patrick Pizzella in opposition to proposed changes to federal regulations for registered apprenticeships.

The new rule would allow independent entities -- industry groups or for-profit schools, for example -- to launch federally certified apprenticeship programs with lower standards and fewer protections for apprentices and employers.

The proposed changes “unfortunately do not offer to replicate or expand the best elements of apprenticeship, but rather undermine this well established, proven system by removing the quality assurance mechanisms that hold accreditors accountable for poor program outcomes,” Hoyle wrote in her letter to Sec. Pizzella.

“Creating an entirely new apprenticeship recognition system will cause confusion with overlapping jurisdiction and vastly differing levels of certification quality,” Hoyle added.

“By removing third party accreditation of programs, these new proposed standards open the door to fly-by-night training operations and undermine protections for workers, employers, and even whole industries who depend on a qualified workforce.”

Hoyle noted that she supports the goal of expanding apprenticeships to industries where workers are needed and there is a lack of existing programs.

But the Trump Administration’s proposal would attempt to do that by simply watering down the standards that have protected apprentices and given industry a high-quality workforce, she wrote, without addressing apprenticeships’ real modernization needs.

The Labor Commissioner’s full letter is attached.