



August 18, 2025

Spokane City Council

808 W. Spokane Falls Blvd.
Spokane, WA 99201

RE: Opposition to the “Public Dollars for Public Benefit Act” (ORD C36723)

Dear Council Members,

As representatives of Spokane’s business community, we are writing to express our strong opposition to the proposed “Public Dollars for Public Benefit Act” and its mandate for a Community Workforce Agreement (CWA) on city-funded construction projects over \$5 million. While we share the goal of supporting local workers and businesses, this ordinance will have serious unintended consequences for Spokane’s budget, workforce, and economy.

Impact on the City Budget

Requiring CWAs will reduce competition for public projects by excluding many qualified contractors from bidding - particularly non-union firms that make up the majority of Spokane’s construction industry. Less competition means higher bid prices. In addition, the City will be responsible for hiring staff to monitor compliance, track complex reporting requirements, and manage disputes, creating new ongoing administrative costs. Additionally, the City could face significant legal challenges as we have seen in other areas across the country. These expenses come at a time when Spokane is already facing budget constraints, forcing difficult choices about funding essential services like public safety, housing, and infrastructure maintenance.

Impact on Local Businesses and Workers

CWAs will create significant barriers for many local contractors - especially small, minority-, and women-owned businesses - by requiring them to work through union hiring halls, limit the use of their existing employees, and take on new administrative burdens. In Washington, over 85% of construction workers are non-union, and nearly 98% of WMBE contractors operate as open-shop businesses. This ordinance would put those firms and their employees at a

competitive disadvantage, forcing them to choose between abandoning their current workforce model or losing access to public work entirely.

Better Alternatives Exist

We believe there are more effective and inclusive ways to achieve local hire goals without sacrificing competition, increasing costs, or shutting out the majority of Spokane's workforce.

We urge the Council to reject this ordinance and work with the broader business and construction community to develop strategies that strengthen our local economy and provide opportunities for all qualified contractors and workers.

Thank you for your consideration of our position and your commitment to Spokane's economic health.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Stewart
Inland Northwest AGC

Sarah Cottom
**Associated Builders & Contractors,
Inland Pacific Chapter**

Emilie Cameron
Downtown Spokane Partnership

John Somerlott
Greater Spokane Incorporated

Joel White
Spokane Home Builders Association