



Testimony in Support of HB 1289

The Associated Landscape Contractors (ALCC) and the Green Industries of Colorado (GreenCO), in partnership with the Colorado Community College System are pleased to support HB 1289.

Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado (ALCC) is the trade association for landscape companies throughout Colorado. For more than 50 years, ALCC has led the way for quality workmanship and professional practices within the industry, raised public awareness of the value of the built landscape and advocated both nationally and within Colorado with policy makers on issues such as workforce development and water conservation that impact the viability of the landscape industry. Colorado's green industry contributes upwards of \$2 billion annually to the Colorado economy and provides 40,000 jobs.

Landscape Career Pathways Program

In the fall of 2014 Colorado Community College System (CCCS) approached ALCC to explore collaborating to develop a career pathway program to bring high school students from schools statewide into landscape industry jobs. For more than a dozen years, ALCC had been working with CCCS to provide selected industry training for high school teachers. At that time, ALCC had staff and volunteers serving on advisory boards of one Denver area high school and two community colleges.

In addition, ALCC had involved high school and community college students in Landscape Industry Certified Technician testing. Consequently, CCCS anticipated ALCC would want to explore this opportunity to develop closer ties with educators. Landscape-related coursework in Colorado is under the "Ag/FFA" umbrella where plant science and related courses are already firmly established. Expanding offerings to include landscape skills is a logical extension of these existing programs.

Within education, there is a strong impetus and interest to involve students in Career & Technical Education (CTE) whereby students can graduate from high school with job-ready skills. The growing synergy between educators and industry comes at a critical time when educators are being pushed toward CTE and the landscape industry is experiencing a critical shortage of trained, skilled workers. The current intersection of CTE and landscape industry need for workers is profound. Colorado is experiencing the worst shortage of landscape workers since before the recession.

Two prototype schools - one rural and one suburban – have curriculum in place as of this year.

- **Platte Valley High School, Kersey, CO** is a rural high school with a strong Ag/FFA program in place and where ca. two-thirds of students are already involved in

CTE Ag-related courses. The two CTE teachers were ready to incorporate the Career Pathway Program. Two ALCC volunteers with operations nearby are now working with the school as advisors. One has done classroom presentations about industry opportunities. Both teachers attended a teacher training sponsored by ALCC in January.

- **Green Mountain High School, Lakewood CO** is a Denver-area school. Subsequent to meetings in the fall of 2015 with the principal and CTE teacher, an ALCC staff member and industry volunteers have been invited to serve on the Advisory Board. The school will also be the site of ALCC's 2016 Denver Chapter Day of Service project where volunteers will work alongside students to renovate the school's entry-area planting bed and construct a separate outdoor learning lab where students can practice landscape skills.

This past January, Jan. 2016 – CCCS and ALCC facilitated a teacher training session for 28 high school teachers on how to assemble an irrigation system. Teachers received a "Sprinkler System in a Box" containing all the components needed to assemble a complete irrigation system on a 6-foot tabletop which they did during the training. Teachers left the session with their box, an Irrigation Training Manual and the know-how to repeat this training with their students.

This training was well-received with registration more than twice the expected number. In addition, teachers came from the four corners of Colorado – from rural areas in the plains and in the mountains as well as from urban areas along the Interstate-25 corridor. CCCS and ALCC worked intentionally to create success models that will build momentum conducive to other schools in urban and rural areas wanting to be involved. As the result of the Jan. 2016 irrigation training, several schools have expressed interest in implementing the Career Pathways program and are taking steps to do so. At least two more schools are on board for fall 2016 – and likely more.

ALCC was one of the first state associations in the country to offer Landscape Industry Certification Technician testing – and the Colorado program is one of the most successful industry certification programs in the country. ALCC's five Landscape Industry Certifications can be incorporated into the Pathways program so that students can work toward certification while in high school. With this legislation, the Landscape Career Pathway program, industry certifications will grow.

ALCC firmly believes that addressing the shortage of skilled and knowledgeable people in the industry's workforce is a critical piece of bridging the gap between education and industry. We encourage you to support HB 1289.