

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Project Labor Agreements**

Q. Can open-shop workers participate in a project built with a project labor agreement?

A. No. On a PLA project, the union is the sole and exclusive bargaining representative of all craft employees, and all such employees must be referred by the local union.

Q. How does a PLA effect project costs?

A. Since [81.8 percent](#) of the Massachusetts construction workforce chooses not to affiliate with a union, PLAs reduce competition which increases costs. In 2024, when a Westfield, MA water treatment plant project was re-bid without a PLA due to a court injunction, the winning electrical bid alone was \$15 million below the lowest union contractor.

Q. How do PLAs impact minority contractor participation?

A. Well over 90 percent of minority contractors in Massachusetts are open shop. As John Cruz, owner of a third-generation minority construction firm in Boston wrote to state lawmakers, “If you make construction projects union-only, minority contractors and workers are effectively shut out.”

Q. Are union construction workers better trained?

A. No. All contractors, union and open shop, are subject to the local prequalification and Division of Capital Asset and Maintenance (DCAMM) prequalification requirements. Similarly, all construction workers are subject to the same state licensing requirements.

Q. Do PLAs ensure that all workers earn fair wages?

A. No. All public construction projects in Massachusetts are already covered by state and federal prevailing wage laws that guarantee union-scale wages for all workers.