

## LETTERS

# Apprentices are being sidelined by outdated state laws

Massachusetts needs to apply common sense to fix the ratio problem at the heart of our construction labor shortage.

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Massachusetts does indeed face a huge shortage of construction workers (“[Would you hire an electrician from Harvard Vocational School?](#)” Opinion, Nov. 19) and expanding vocational-technical high school capacity to accommodate the over 10,000 students currently on voc-tech wait lists would be an important step.

Unfortunately, that would only be part of the solution. Even with additional vocational school capacity, under Massachusetts apprenticeship laws, construction ratios require up to five experienced journeypersons in a trade for each apprentice on a job site. That’s right — unlike in classrooms or hospitals, where a teacher or physician leads a cohort of students or residents, multiple experienced workers are often required for each apprentice in Massachusetts.

Ratios often make it financially infeasible for contractors to hire the number of journeypersons they would need to hire an additional apprentice, the shortage of construction workers continues, and the cost of solving critical problems like the Commonwealth’s housing shortage remains out of reach.

Together with expanding vocational-technical school capacity, Massachusetts needs to apply common sense to fix the ratio problem at the heart of our construction labor shortage.

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