

TESTIMONY – HB145 / SB1 - STATE FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT - PREVAILING  
WAGE - STOP WORK ORDERS

KUNTA KENTE BEDNEY

FAVORABLE

Hello. My name is Kunta Kente Bedney, and I am a proud Council Representative with the Eastern Atlantic States Regional Council of Carpenters.

I support this legislation because I've seen a lot of people being cheated and exploited throughout my life.

I grew up in the 80's. My father got killed in Lorton Jail in Virginia just after I was born. When I was 2 years old, my mother was also incarcerated and did 10 years in jail. I was raised by my great aunt – my grandmother's sister – and by the time my mother got out I was making decisions on my own, and was ripping and running the streets in Washington DC.

I dropped out of high school in 11<sup>th</sup> grade, and when I was 19, I got into some trouble in Prince George's County, and did 18 months in Upper Marlboro.

During those 18 months, I had time to think about my life. I said to myself if God gave me an opportunity to for another chance, I'd make the best of it.

When I got out I got my GED and got my pre-apprenticeship certificate in construction. I was blessed, because someone believed in me when I didn't believe in myself – a carpenter named Maurice Harris. He gave me the skills, guidance, motivation and positivity that I never had because I never really had a father. We worked through Habitat for Humanity building low income housing, while I studied to be a journeyman. After that I became a foreman, and now I'm a council representative.

Today, I'm a productive middle class citizen, a proud carpenter, and father blessed with 6 beautiful children in school, and 1 in college. My office is in Upper Marlboro, and every day I reach out to communities throughout Maryland, DC and Virginia – community groups, churches, high schools, pre-apprenticeship programs – wherever people are in poverty, and give young people the same opportunities that I had.

There are a lot of opportunities through these programs – they just need to see that light – and need a little help to turn their lives around.

I've seen a lot of bad things on construction sites – a lot of bad things happen to good people – people being exploited, being cheated out of wages, and getting hurt on jobsites because they never had the skills to be doing the work that they were doing. It's not right.

This legislation is a small step in turning that around.

Thank you.