

[CITY LETTERHEAD]

May 20, 2025

Lori Chavez-DeRemer, Secretary
United States Department of Labor
Office of the Secretary
200 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20210

Re: ***PLEASE READ THIS LETTER*** - Funding for Trapper Creek Job Corps Civilian Conservation Center

Dear Secretary Chavez-DeRemer,

It was recently brought to the attention of the Hamilton City Council and Mayor that federal funding for Job Corps Civilian Conservation Centers may be in danger. This is very concerning to the citizens of Hamilton and Ravalli County, as our local Trapper Creek Job Corps is a vital resource not only to its students, but also the City of Hamilton and many other state and federal agencies in Montana.

As a former City Council president and Mayor, you may already be aware that Job Corps programs such as Trapper Creek (and Timber Lake in Oregon), provide free career training and education for low-income 16- through 24-year-olds. We are not aware of the coursework for Job Corps programs in other areas of the United States, but in the Pacific Northwest Job Corps programs train their students in trades that are vital to the economy of our heavily forested, more rural region.

In the Northwest, Job Corps students are trained and receive hands-on experience so they can get jobs in crucial trades as carpentry, electrical, forestry, automotive, painting and welding. They can also train in culinary arts, finance and business. Job Corps programs are available to those who cannot afford community college or technical training programs. Job Corps programs are residential, which is important because many of the students come from disadvantaged homes that do not have adequate supervision or care for basic needs, let alone resources for technical training.

Located in the south end of the Bitterroot Valley, up the West Fork of the Bitterroot River, Trapper Creek Job Corps has been in operation in Montana for decades, and has an extremely successful track record of not only educating and training its students, but using that training to contribute to and serve the local economy.

As you can see from the *Trapper Creek Chronicles* included with this letter, in 2024 Job Corps students in Montana alone provided over \$3.5 million in workforce resources, including

assistance to local, state and federal agencies. A few specific examples of assistance in our jurisdiction include:

- local lawn cleanup in the spring in the fall for residents who need assistance
- building benches for local parks and performing necessary maintenance
- stringing Christmas lights for the Downtown Association and providing cleanup for special community events
- helping stage Special Olympics events for children and adults with intellectual disabilities

Of extreme importance in our heavily forested region, Job Corps students support state and federal agencies with wildfire risk reduction while gaining experience in firefighting. As the *Chronicles* explains, in 2024 over 100,000 hours of support to Forest Service and firefighting agencies was provided. **This is key to preserving and managing a highly valuable resource (the national forests) as well as allowing farmers and ranchers to access the high-mountain lakes relied upon for irrigation water essential to producing crops and watering livestock.**

Trapper Creek and other Job Corps programs in our region boost students from chronic poverty and reliance on public assistance, redirect them from the expensive criminal justice system, and allow graduates to begin careers or apprenticeships, go on to college, or join the military.

We understand the challenge facing our President and Congress to scrutinize federal budgets and make difficult funding decisions nation-wide. From the City of Hamilton's perspective, in our more rural region of the U.S., Job Corps programs are a critical component of our contribution to the national economy. We respectfully request that full funding of our Job Corps programs be continued so they can continue to shape the lives of young Americans, making them productive and important members of society and a part of our productive economic community.

Thank you,

Mayor
Hamilton City Council

Cc: Elisabeth Messenger, Director - National Office US Department of Labor
Governor Gianforte
Montana Congressional Delegation
The Honorable Brooke Rollins, Secretary of Agriculture

Note: Job Corps is administered by the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Office of Job Corps. Job Corps operates under the leadership of the National Director supported by a National Office staff and a field network of 6 Regional Offices located in Boston, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas and San Francisco. Job Corps operations are also supported by ETA's Office of Contracts Management (OCM) and the Office of Financial Administration (OFA).