Joint Statement from the National Taskforce on Tradeswomen's Issues and the International Building Trades Unions listed below on the Urgent Need to Protect and Fund the U.S. Department of Labor's Women's Bureau and WANTO Program

As tradeswomen and labor unions committed to building a stronger, more equitable workforce, we stand in solidarity to urge Congress to protect and fully fund the U.S. Department of Labor's Women's Bureau and the Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations (WANTO) program.

Access to registered apprenticeships and careers in the skilled trades—such as bricklayers, boilermakers, cement masons, electricians, elevator constructors, insulators, ironworkers, laborers, operating engineers, painters and allied trades, plumbing and steamfitters, roofers, sheet metal work, truck drivers, and more —offers a pathway to economic security and upward mobility. These are careers that provide family-sustaining wages, benefits, and long-term financial stability. Yet despite making up nearly half of our nation's workforce, women represent less than 4% of skilled trades workers and continue to be overrepresented—at 70%—among all low-wage workers. This persistent disparity represents not just a loss of opportunity for women, but a missed solution to one of our country's most pressing workforce challenges. Women have shown over and over that they can do the work and are valuable employees.

America is facing a critical shortage of skilled workers in the trades—jobs that are essential to maintaining and growing our economy. We cannot afford to leave women behind. Ensuring that more women have access to apprenticeship programs, which are a key pathway to these careers, is not only a matter of fairness, it is a practical necessity for our national economic health. Women are a vital part of our economy—and when they are given the opportunity to work in the skilled trades, they thrive.

The U.S. Department of Labor's Women's Bureau and the WANTO program have been instrumental in helping women break into these historically male-dominated industries. Through guidance, technical assistance, and support to employers, labor organizations, and pre-apprenticeship programs, they have opened doors that have too often been closed. Their work strengthens both families and our workforce—and their continued efforts are more important now than ever.

To continue this critical work, we urge Congress to provide a minimum of $32.5 million in funding for the U.S. Department of Labor's Women's Bureau. This funding is essential to maintain the staffing and resources necessary to improve working conditions for women and expand their access to high-wage, nontraditional employment.

We, the undersigned tradeswomen, allied organizations and unions, know how our nation benefits when women are welcomed and supported in apprenticeships and in the trades. We stand united in calling on Congress to invest in a future where all workers—regardless of gender—have the opportunity to succeed.

Women are ready to build America. Let’s make sure they have the tools to do it.

Signed:

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