

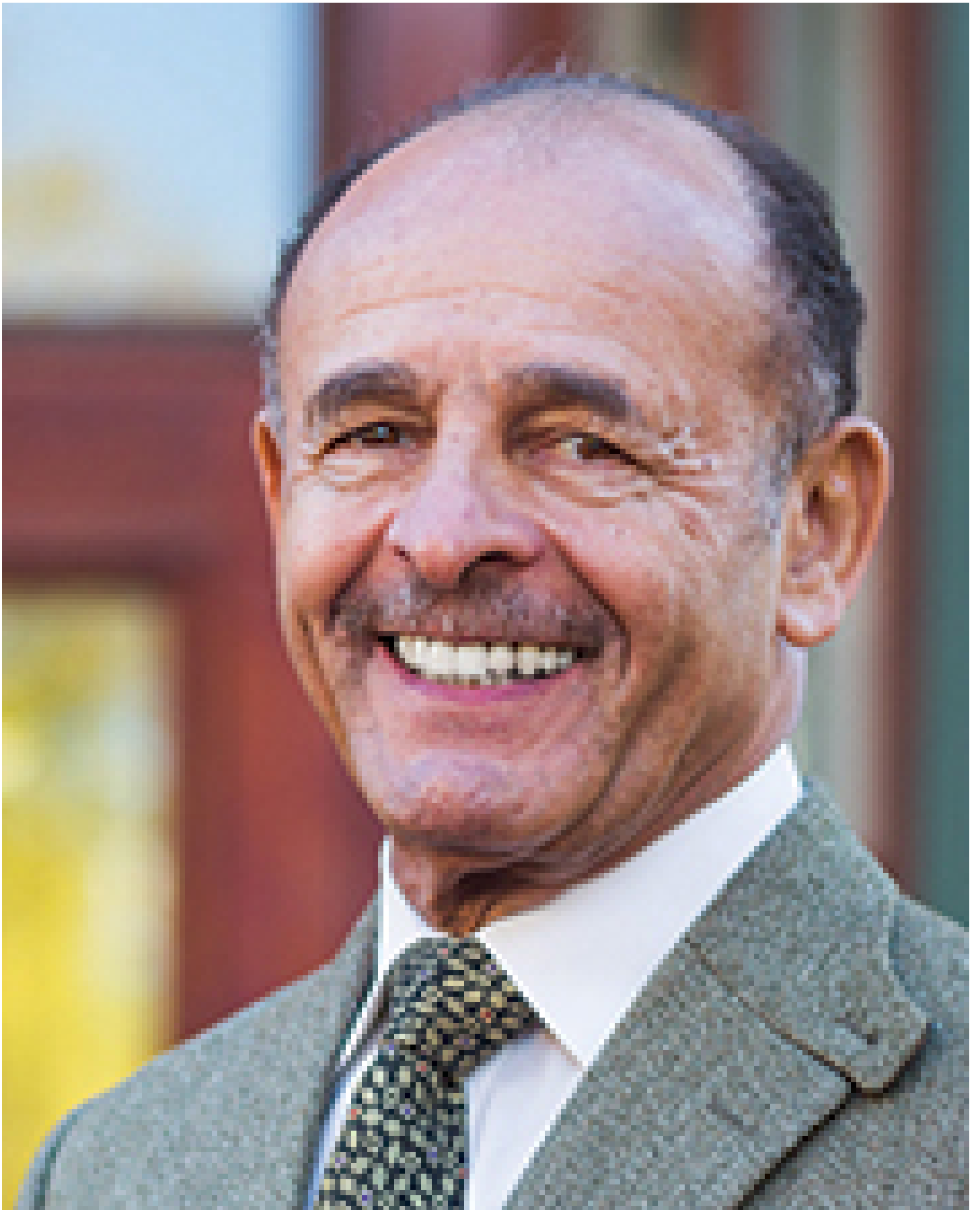


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## **ABC Chairman's Message: Update from our Beacon Hill team**

August 19, 2022 - Construction Design & Engineering



John Cruz

The two-year state formal legislative session came to a particularly chaotic end on July 31st. This month I would like to use this message to provide an update from our Beacon Hill team of lobbyist John Bartley and government affairs consultant Shelley Kaleita, and thank them for their excellent work.

Just days before the session ended, lawmakers appeared blindsided by the news that a 1986 law that limits state revenue growth to the growth in statewide wages would be triggered for the first time in 35 years, which will require the commonwealth to rebate an estimated \$3 billion to state taxpayers.

The last-minute surprise short-circuited several major bills legislators were racing to agree upon before the session ended. Despite that, the session was, on balance a pretty good one for ABC members.

We and other industry organizations successfully beat back wage theft legislation that held businesses vicariously liable for any wage violations of companies they hire. Similarly, a bill we have also opposed for several sessions that would redefine the definition of fraud specifically for construction and eliminate the requirement that harm result from the alleged fraud also failed to pass. There was more good news in our successful opposition to legislation that would have expanded prevailing wage to include off-site prefabrication.

As always, there were some disappointments during the session. All of us are well aware of the labor shortage our industry faces. Yet language that would have loosened hiring restrictions that in some cases require up to five journeypersons for each apprentice was not included in a final economic development bill (fate of which is unknown since it is still in conference committee amid the fracas over the 1986 law and the legislative session is over).

Also on the very important ratio issue, we are pleased that ABC MA's work to draw attention to the problems ratios cause by limiting apprentice employment is getting more attention, including from Gov. Baker and Labor Secretary Rosalin Acosta.

We also planted seeds during this session that will pay dividends in the future. We were awarded pre-apprenticeship and diversity grants that are allowing us to provide pre-apprenticeship training to several cohorts of diverse students interested in entering our industry. Funding for a diversity study will give ABC MA members the information they need to attract and retain the diverse workforce needed to meet the growing demand for our services.

Government relations is an extremely complex endeavor – particularly for an association of open-shop construction contractors in Massachusetts. But we emerged from this session having made progress on important workforce development issues and having avoided proposals that would have made it more difficult for us to compete.

John Cruz is the chairman of Associated Builders and Contractors Inc.-Mass. Chapter and president & CEO of The Cruz Companies, Roxbury, Mass.

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