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## **Chairman's Message: It's been an honor to serve this past year - John Cruz**

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John Cruz

My first thought about this final chairman's message was "Has it really been a year already?" Thankfully, when I reflected more, I realized just how much has gone on in that time.

Given the pace of change in construction, activity is one of the few constants. That change extends to how we train those who are entering our industry. This year the Gould Construction Institute piloted a daytime electrical training program. Finding enough qualified workers to meet demand is one of our biggest challenges. To address it, we must make careers in construction appealing to young people, and the fact is that they would much rather train during the day when they're fresh than work all day and then commute to a couple of hours of schooling, which is a recipe for very little family time. We hope our next step will be to extend the daytime pilot to sheet metal.

Late last year our chapter was awarded a Construction Diversity and Apprenticeship Expansion Grant by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development. Part of this grant funded the internal diversity study of ABC MA membership. I'm proud the survey found that members have taken active steps to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within their companies.

A final report will be issued next year. Our goal is to use the survey results to equip members with the data and resources they need to become more diverse, equitable, and inclusive and understand their organization's diversity dynamics. This will promote workforce development by helping the companies attract and retain diverse talent, allow them to meet and exceed workforce participation goals, and provide methods for creating a more inclusive workplace.

Just last month, I was pleased to see a large turnout at our local Craft Championships at Medford Vocational Technical School. Electrical winner Nick Palmer of Nardone Electrical Corp. and Pipefitting winner Patrick Walsh of DECCO, Inc. will move on to the national championships at the ABC National Conference in Kissimmee, FL in March. It's critical that we recognize the excellence of tomorrow's industry leaders.

The coming year will no doubt be at least as hectic as this one has been, and I'm pleased that someone as capable as Vera Vadeboncoeur will be taking the reins. I hope everyone has a wonderful holiday season. It's been an honor to serve as your chairman during the past year.

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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