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Public Works
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Energy Upgrades that Save Families and Businesses Money,
Reduce Pollution, and Create Good Jobs.”
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If you had told me in 2003 that 4 years later I would be a single mom on welfare, I would have thought you were crazy. I was an emancipated young woman who had just completed a four -year degree at the University of Oregon. I worked two jobs, studied full time and through the summers because I was going to be the first person in my family to obtain a college education. I was going to be somebody! I wanted to improve people's quality of life. My Environmental Studies degree was going to help people live more naturally and prevent disease, rather than simply treating symptoms. I studied all of the world's problems and a lot of solutions that really exist and are happening every day.

I found it hard to get a job in my field then so did my own environmental studies of Los Angeles, San Francisco, Turin Italy and Oaxaca Mexico. I learned two new languages, opened my eyes wide, tutored the head of Energy in Turin, Italy, translated engineering documents for high speed trains, translated for international anti globalization conferences, installed \$50,000 sustainable landscapes, participated in Eco building projects with the Zapotec Indians and always wondered what I could do in my own country.

In 2007 I returned to the US from Mexico as a widow and pregnant. I did everything I could to find work, even if I had to wear a baby on my back, but there weren't even jobs to fight over. I moved back to Portland Oregon in 2010 where I hoped I could get back on my path. I had a lot of interviews for 6 months, but I was one of hundreds or sometimes thousands of applicants.

In my free time I studied the Portland Plan and all the major players in the area of sustainability. When I learned about the Oregon Tradeswomen, a non - profit that helps women prepare themselves for jobs in the trades, I knew it would lead to something. My welfare counselor, persuaded by my passion, made an exception and approved it as an apprenticeship. I learned about the field of weatherization during that course and I immediately knew it would marry my skilled background with my degree. Although I started out under the bus, or mobile home rather, it was a step in the right direction. I obtained a green career counselor at Native American Youth and Families, applied for the Pathway out of Poverty grant through Worksource and

was hired by a non-profit Clean Energy Works contractor. I was drawn to this career because I saw I could only go up. In the next year I gained priceless experience in my trade and all the certificates I needed with the Building Performance Institute to work as a Residential Energy Analyst. I now inspect homes to see how energy efficient they are and test combustion safety. All of my training was paid for by that grant. My current employer, HELP, has taught me how to generate Home Performance Reports, make recommendations and bid jobs. They also just invested in me becoming certified to perform Radon Testing and Mitigations, something that will bring them more business and me more growth and opportunity.

I like to speak for the unemployed because to me they are not just a statistic, they are the faces I saw every week in the unemployment line and in group interviews and job fairs. Some of us had college degrees and excellent employment history and several interviews a week with no success.

I would not be here today without the programs and organizations that create jobs and help the unemployed find their path to becoming productive, self-reliant members of the community.