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**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE WOMEN'S ISSUES COMMITTEE OF THE
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL**

September 20, 2007

Hearing: **Are There Enough Non-Traditional Employment Opportunity for
Women in New York City?**

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Member Operation Punch List

AND

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OPL is an independent voice for tradeswomen that receives administrative support from Legal Momentum. The views and actions of this group do not necessarily represent those of Legal Momentum.

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Thank you to the Women's Issues Committee of The New York City Council for inviting us to this very important hearing. My name is Tiffany Craddock and I am a Carpenter 2nd year Apprentice and member of Local 157. I would also like to introduce my co-presenter, my sister Thieanna Craddock who is a Plumber and a member of Local 1. She will speak after my introduction.

We're here today to ask the Women's issues Committee to help spread the word about our experiences in the trades. More importantly we need the Committee's partnership in creating policies that will ensure equal opportunity for women in the construction trades. We need to create and maintain workplace environments that are both friendly and safe for women.

My sister and I joined the trades right out of high school. There was no doubt in either of our minds about what we wanted to do for our respective life careers. We both attended Irvine High School and planned to attend college immediately after graduation. While at high school we became active members of our local church, this led to our volunteering to do projects that involved refurbishing, building and maintenance on behalf of the church. Several members of our church were employed in the construction trades and they would lead the repair teams. My sister and I enjoyed this volunteer opportunity and started looking into colleges that would give us a degree in the trades. A member of the church who was on our volunteer team was employed to the Cooperative Technical Education School and she told us about the opportunities to learn more about the trades without having to pay for a four-year college. We immediately enrolled in Coop Tech, I joined the carpentry division and Thieanna joined the plumbing department.

As a carpenter apprentice I have learned many skills including how to read blueprints and I am very excited about my future in the trades.

Thienna

My name is Thienna Craddock and I am a 2nd year plumber apprentice. I love being a plumber and think this is one of the best jobs to have in New York City. Being a plumber allows me to see a side of New York City that some can only dream about. I have traveled throughout the boroughs and have learned so much about the architecture and history of New York, all of which would not have been possible if I were not a plumber assigned to many different sites.

Since my volunteer days at church I knew I wanted to learn more about the city's water system and more importantly I needed to know what to do if my toilet clogged so I could fix it myself. The men and women construction workers at my church told me about the income potential associated with the construction trades and this was a part of my motivation to enroll at Coop Tech, an alternative New York City High School. The opportunity to earn while I learn was not the major driving force behind my decision to continue in the plumbing trade. I have a family that supports my career path. This family support has been especially important because I have a sister who understands my work experience more than any other girlfriend. The trades are still viewed as a "dirty" job for women who cannot do better. We need to work on changing this perception among girls and boys. There are many girls who think you cannot be feminine and do physical work. I am proof that this is not true. The construction trades is honest decent work that does not get the respect it is owed.

I have been continuously employed during my apprenticeship and consider myself to be one of the luckier ones. I am thankful everyday for the wonderful experience I am having in the field. I know that many women before me and even some of the women who just graduated are having a difficult time working in the trades. One of the complaints I hear regularly is that there are no bathroom facilities for women on site. I can testify that this is true because on half of the sites I have been employed on, I have had to ask storekeepers nearby to let me use their facility. The other half of the sites I was given my own key for a separate unit or I had to share a port-a-potty with male colleagues. This needs to change and all sites need to have proper bathroom facilities.

Plumbing is not a hard job; therefore women can do this type of work. I think there are many jobs harder than a plumber, for example being a nurse, yet I see so few women in my field and there are so many nurses in the health sector. I think something needs to be done to attract more women to this amazing career.

In my apprenticeship class there are only two (2) females compared to sixteen males in the group. We need to make every effort to make sure that there are not such uneven numbers in the trades.