

PA Senate Finance Committee Hearing on Film Tax Credits
April 15th, 2022
Testifying as a member of IATSE Local 489
Ashley "Brick" Brickman

I'd like to wish good day to Chairman Hutchinson, Chairman Fontana, members of the Senate Finance Committee, and Senators Bartolotta, Costa, and Robinson. I would like to thank you all for hearing my testimony today on the benefits that myself and other workers experience thanks to the PA Film Tax Credit Program.

My name is Brick Brickman, and I have been a member of IATSE Local 489 for the past 8 years. I work both as a set painter on productions and as Representative for the Paint Department on the Local's executive board. It took a long time for me to get to where I am today. After graduating from college in Pittsburgh, I had to cobble together a myriad of jobs for nearly a decade before I was able to seize upon an opportunity to work on a movie, and subsequently join IATSE Local 489.

Working as a union member in the film industry has come with a lot of firsts: I have annuity, pension, and healthcare plans, all directly contributed to through my employers, and my hourly wage has effectively doubled. All of these benefits continue to have positive, tangible effects on my daily life, from the brick house I own to the titanium of my dental implant. With the personal savings I've accrued through each production worked, I have been able to help friends and family members through difficult times and support locally owned businesses, artists and charitable causes that are dear to me. More over, the sense of being financially stable alleviates the constant anxiety and fear that comes from living paycheck-to-paycheck, and lacking affordable and consistent quality healthcare.

Every day I am grateful for what working in the film industry has given me, and I know my union siblings share those sentiments, as I've seen their lives expand alongside my own. Just this past year and through turbulent times, I know of three members who have purchased their first homes, two are celebrating becoming new fathers, and yet another is about to get married this summer. These are just a few examples of film workers I know personally, who have been able to afford and embrace these major benchmarks in their lives.

As much as other union members and I presently benefit from our work in the film industry, I also want to take a moment to acknowledge the untapped workforce that wishes to join our ranks as well. For four years I have been representing our Paint Department on our executive board, which is just one of eleven studio mechanic crafts that our Local covers. Over the past year alone I have watched as the number of members in my department grew by nearly a third, almost 20 new film workers. Like me, many had waited years for the opportunity, and are now receiving those improved financial and health benefits which their previous employment did not offer.

Acknowledging the positive impact that a career in film has is to highlight just one aspect of how the PA Film Tax Credit program successfully attracts industry to Pennsylvania and sustains its labor force over the long-term. As the continued stability of our working members and the future growth of our workforce are directly reciprocal to the maintenance, and ideally the gradual increase of the PA Film Tax Credit program, I hope you will move to support it in future legislation.

I want to thank you all again for taking the time to listen to my testimony, your consideration is deeply appreciated and your support invaluable.