



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **New Construction School Invests in Local Talent by Offering Free Education**

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San Juan, Puerto Rico – With a firm commitment to strengthening the Island’s workforce and opening new opportunities for Puerto Ricans, the Home Builders Institute (HBI) has officially inaugurated its new school in San Juan: BuildStrong Academy Puerto Rico. This institution is dedicated to training men and women in construction trades through free programs designed to meet the high demand for skilled labor currently present in the market.

The program was created with the goal of providing practical and accessible education that equips students with the technical and professional skills needed to successfully enter the workforce. The initiative is funded by the Puerto Rico Department of Housing through CDBG-DR funds from the Workforce Training Program, aimed at supporting recovery projects and sustainable economic development. “The BuildStrong Academy of Puerto Rico is more than a training program—it’s a catalyst for economic growth and community resilience. I am proud to have secured the federal funding for Puerto Rico’s reconstruction after the 2017 hurricanes, which has made it possible to invest in initiatives like this. These efforts reflect our unwavering commitment to expanding educational and employment opportunities, while building the foundation for a stronger, more resilient Puerto Rico—one powered by modern infrastructure and a skilled workforce ready for the future,” stated the Honorable Jenniffer González-Colón, Governor of Puerto Rico.

HBI is a nonprofit organization that has been a leader in construction industry training and education. Over the course of 50 years, it has established more than 700 programs across 48 states and has educated and trained over 250,000 students. “Our program is designed to play a vital role in accelerating the island’s long-term recovery by equipping individuals with the hands-on skills needed to rebuild homes, infrastructure, and communities. By offering industry-recognized, tuition-free training in the skilled trades, the academy will not only address the growing demand for qualified workers but also create pathways to meaningful,

sustainable employment for local residents. This investment in workforce development is a key step toward economic resilience, community empowerment, and a stronger, more self-sufficient Puerto Rico”, said HBI President and CEO Ed Brady.

The Honorable Ciary Pérez Peña, Secretary of the Puerto Rico Department of Housing, also spoke on the importance of the program. “We are proud to celebrate the launch of the BuildStrong Academy in Puerto Rico, a project made possible through a \$10.9 million investment from the CDBG-DR Workforce Training Program. This initiative shows how recovery funds translate into real opportunities for our people: training a new generation of skilled workers, strengthening infrastructure, and promoting sustainable economic development. At the Department of Housing, we reaffirm our commitment to continue supporting projects that not only rebuild, but also empower Puerto Rico and prepare it for a more resilient future.”

### **Specialized Training and First Graduates**

Each course is designed to take participants from knowledge to action through an intensive, hands-on 18-week program. Students receive guidance from expert instructors who support them throughout their learning journey in areas such as carpentry, masonry, electricity, and plumbing.

The effort is already yielding results: the first groups of participants successfully completed their training this past summer. “We didn't just learn how to use tools, read blueprints, and cut wood... we learned to believe in ourselves. I want to sincerely thank our instructors for their patience and for teaching us not only with words, but with their example. You made a huge difference in our lives!”, said Alma Nicole Reyes, one of the two women who graduated from the carpentry program at BuildStrong Academy Puerto Rico in July of this year.

### **Benefits, Opportunities, and Social Impact**

In addition to free tuition and courses, participants receive a wide range of benefits including uniforms and lunch, safety equipment (hard hat, glasses, gloves, and boots), the OSHA-10 certification, job placement assistance, and a \$1,000 tool kit incentive upon being hired after graduation. No prior experience is required, and anyone 18 years or older can apply online at [hbi.org/pr](http://hbi.org/pr).

As part of the institution’s social commitment, participants also have the opportunity to apply their skills through community service projects, providing specialized labor that supports initiatives benefiting vulnerable communities and the rehabilitation of public spaces in need of attention. Without a doubt, these graduates and new students represent a firm step toward Puerto Rico’s progress, with skilled local talent and new opportunities for professional development in high-demand careers.

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