

Testimony of Frank DaCato, Training Coordinator

United Association of Plumbers & Pipefitters Local 777
Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee

Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, members of the Education Committee. My name is Frank DaCato, I am the training Coordinator for Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 777 and I am also a member of the State Apprenticeship Council and State Plumbing Board. I would first like to thank you for taking the time to listen to me today. I have been involved with apprenticeship in one form or another for 30 years. I started out as a registered plumber's apprentice. I was an instructor from 1984 through 1998. Since that time I have been Local 777's apprenticeship coordinator. I am here today to speak to you in opposition to Bill 6370.

This bill would pull the apprenticeship program out of the Department of Labor and put it into the new Middle College System. This would affect the state apprenticeship programs ability to enforce DOL regulations. As part of their enforcement the DOL apprenticeship program uses employer tax records as a means of enforcement which would no longer be accessible to them. The proposed Middle College System also calls for 3500 FTE's of which eight (8) would be designated for apprenticeship. The apprenticeship program would lose four (4) employees. This would cause a lost of focus on apprenticeship. As you may be aware in 2004 the Department of Labor's staff was cut from 14 people to 1 person. At that time a registration fee of \$55 per apprentice was instituted to help with rehiring staff and with defraying some of the cost of running the program. Although this caused a financial burden to our program (local 777 and it members in 2008 have paid \$9,960 in registration fees) we were happy to help with our fair share. There is another bill that proposes to double these fees. This would cause a great hardship on our organization. The bill also proposes to send this money into the General Fund where it would be lost to other programs and not to be used for its original intent. Again this would cause a cut in staff funding which would make it more difficult to register apprentices. This would mean less income from registrations and more importantly less of an opportunity for the apprentice to complete their program since, especially in the licensed trades, an apprentice must meet minimum required on the job registered hours before being allowed to sit for the test. I do not want to take too much of your time so I will close by again asking you to reject Bill 6370. If you have any questions I would be happy to try and answer them now or you may also contact me by phone at 203-686-0700 or e-mail at fdacato@local777.com. I will help in anyway I can.

Respectfully Submitted; Monday March 9th, 2009
Frank J. DaCato, Training Coordinator