

**FINANCE REVENUE & BONDING COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2009**

SB 837 – An Act Concerning Various Fees

Testimony submitted by:

**Joyce A. Wojtas, Lobbyist – Mechanical Contractors Assoc. of CT (MCAC) and
UA Plumbers & Pipefitters Local 777**

Re: Section 232 – Apprentice Training Program

The MCAC and Local 777 strongly oppose the provisions in subsection (c) that eliminate the crediting of the registration fees for apprentices and sponsors to a separate non-lapsing appropriation to the Labor Department for administering this program. The apprentice training program is vital to providing jobs to people who will be involved in the economy recovery that will result from the federal stimulus package approved in Congress. This program runs exceptionally well and provides jobs with a future for individuals who learn a trade and end up earning a decent wage along with health and pension benefits.

The current law, with apprentice and sponsor fees was a statutory commitment to young people interested in becoming apprentices and the sponsors, willing to pay for their training. It was an agreement by both union and non-union employers and the unionized trades. Without appropriate administration by the Department of Labor, this program would experience serious problems to the detriment of all involved.

There is a bill that transfers this entire program to a proposed “Middle College”, which would also be a disaster and is opposed by MCAC and Local 777. Leave the program in the DOL and if more dollars are required, then raise the fees accordingly to pay for it. Our kids deserve it!!!

Re: Section 107, 108 & 109 – Occupational Licensing Fees – Construction Trades

The MCAC and Local 777 understand the serious budget problems that the state is facing in the next two fiscal years and I am certain the approximate 40,000 licensed contractors and journeymen and women in the construction trades would be willing to do their part to help if they could count on some of the revenue from the fees going towards hiring more inspectors for an effective licensing enforcement program.

Currently, the licensed plumbers, electricians, pipefitters, sprinklerfitters, HVAC and sheetmetal workers, etc. and contractors pay approximately \$2.6 million in license fees to the general fund. The fee increased in this bill will provide approximately \$5.2 million. The cost for testing is a separate and issuance of a license should not cost more than \$5 per licensee.

In addition, there is a bill before the GAE Committee that eliminates the licensing boards effective July 1. Representatives on these boards are from the respective union and non-union trades and offer their expertise in the administration, enforcement, and resolution of numerous technical issues that often arise involving each trade. They are volunteers and only get paid mileage when they meet. Many do not even claim the mileage.

Under these circumstances, the license will not even be worth the paper it is written on and the fee for the privilege of being able to work in this state will end up as another general fund “cash cow”.

Thank you for your consideration in these matters.

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