

**Testimony of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
Appropriations Committee
Monday February 23, 2009**

Senator Daily and Representative Staples, members of the Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee, my name is Paul Costello Director of Apprenticeship and Training for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Union 90 and National Electrical Contractors Association Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee. I am a licensed electrical contractor E1-122305 and have been involved in the electrical industry for over 25 years.

I am here to express our opposition to Governor's Bill 837, An Act Concerning Various Fees. Section 232 proposes to double the fees that apprentices and their sponsors pay each year. The sponsors of the apprenticeship programs pay almost all of the training costs while apprentices earn decent wages and benefits while learning. It was the apprenticeship community that stepped forward five years ago when Connecticut's apprenticeship System was in trouble due to budget constraints. Staff from the department was cut and it was the sponsors of the Apprenticeship Programs that felt the impact. More importantly it was the apprentices who were directly affected due to the cut backs. Field representatives were no longer accessible to register or monitor apprenticeship programs. Apprentices were not being registered or being monitored to make sure they were receiving the proper wages while they progressed through their apprenticeship. In the licensed trades apprentices found out that they did not have enough registered hours with the State to allow them to take licensing exams.

Private industry and labor / management committees saw the need to maintain the apprenticeship system and a fee for service system were created. The funding from the registration fees collected went to apprenticeship training within the Department of Labor. The fifty five dollars was an added expense in addition to all the other expenses of operating an apprenticeship program.

The proposal will now require an apprentice to pay fifty dollars towards their annual registration fee and the sponsor of the apprentice to pay sixty dollars. The fees collected will no longer go to fund the apprenticeship division were it was originally structured. Now the fees will go into the general fund, in addition four staff positions will be eliminated. This will be a step backwards in the training of our future workforce. It will only make it easier for those that do not follow the requirements that are in place now and penalize the apprentices and sponsors that do comply.

Perhaps an alternative to raising the annual fees would be to collect the penalties imposed by the examining boards for those that break the law. Each month the electrical examining board reviews applications of applicants applying for licensing looking to receive credit for unregistered time. The unregistered time is hours they worked for an employer illegally. Both the employer and the employee violated state laws. Doubling the fees associated with apprenticeship will only add to number of violators that are there now. The reduction in the staff and added expense will be just another excuse that they use. I urge you to oppose Governor's Bill 837 and any changes in the apprenticeship division.