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Testimony of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Education Committee Monday March 9, 2009

Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, members of the Education 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 6370 An Act Concerning A Middle College System. Sections 6, 7, 8, and 9 of the Act all remove the Labor Commissioner as having the jurisdiction over apprenticeship and to be replaced with the "Executive Director of the Middle College System". By transferring the oversight of the apprentices to the proposed "Executive Director of the Middle College System" a disconnection in the apprenticeship system will be created. There are currently over 2,800 employers and labor / management committees employing more than 6,500 apprentices in our registered apprenticeship programs in Connecticut.

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. Now Governor's Bill 6370 is looking take that funding and deposit it into the general fund and eliminate four staff positions on top of it. To make it even worse Senate Bill 837 Section 232 proposes to double the fees that apprentices and their sponsors pay each year.

I urge you to oppose any changes to move apprenticeship to the proposed "Middle College System" and oppose Governor's Bill 6370. Leave apprenticeship training in the jurisdiction of the Commissioner of Labor and those that know how to enforce it.

Respectfully,

Paul Costello
JATC Director