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Testimony
Joseph Brian Bonner
Bonner Electric, Inc.
Before the General Law Committee
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Legislative Office Building

Good morning, Senator Doyle, Representative Taborsak, ranking members and other members of the General Law Committee. My name is Joseph Brian Bonner. I'm a resident of Uncasville, CT, owner of Bonner Electric, Inc., and an unlimited E-1 license holder in the State of CT.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to Raised Bill 6337 An Act Clarifying the Scope of Solar Electricity Work. This bill seeks to require the Commissioner of Consumer Protection to adopt regulations that will allow a PV-1 license holder (a limited license) to perform complete working photovoltaic system installations without the assistance of an unlimited E-1 license holder.

Based on license holder information from the Department of Consumer protection, there are a total of twenty three (23) active PV-1 and PV-2 licenses that are affected by this legislation. Twenty three (23) individuals that were granted permission to install solar photovoltaic electric systems on a limited scope basis. Of these twenty three, only fourteen (14) reside in the State of CT. It is my personal opinion that over the last couple of years these limited licenses have consumed a tremendous amount of this committee's time and the time of the electrical community in response to their requests for legislation changes and scope clarification. I had hoped that this issue would be settled when the Commissioner of Consumer Protection and the Electrical Work Examining Board issued Bulletin #12-2010 on December 10, 2010 which very clearly clarified that "by unanimous vote, that a PV-1 or PV-2 license holder is not permitted to connect to any existing panel, junction box, wiring or circuit(s) on the premises. They are limited to properly terminating their wiring into a junction box or controller of theirs that is not in any way connected to the building's existing electrical system or utility meter. Connection to the building's existing electrical system or utility meter can only be performed by a licensed E-1 or E-2 license holder." I have attached a copy of this Bulletin to my testimony.

Please don't think that a solar photovoltaic system is just some small one or two panel system that any home owner can buy at Home Depot. Though some systems may fall into this category, the scope of a commercial photovoltaic system can involve hundreds, even thousands of PV modules with direct current (DC) brought back to an inverter that takes the DC and converts it into the alternating current (AC) that can be used by the facility and/or sold back to the utility. The output current can be in the thousands of amperes with commercial systems. For example, most all of us have seen the commercials for Pilgrim Furniture's solar installation, this system is advertised as three hundred and forty one (341) kilowatts and is said to provide up to eighty percent of the building's lighting energy. This amount of power is equivalent to nine hundred and fifty (950) amps at two hundred and eight (208) volts and requires large conduits and wires to carry this amount of power. In conjunction with the power produced from the system, it would also be common for the "complete" system to include monitoring systems and local displays with network and power wiring associated with both.

There are approximately thirteen thousand (13,000) E-1 and E-2 electrical license holders in the State of CT. As an E-1 Unlimited Electrical Contractor, I have had to serve four years of apprenticeship and two years as an E-2 Journeyman Electrician prior to sitting for the E-1 exam. As part of the requirements to maintain my E-1 license, I am required to complete Continued Education every year to stay current with the latest codes that are applicable to our ever changing trade. This current bill 6337 would potentially expand the scope of the PV-1 and PV-2 license holder to the equivalent of an unlimited E-1 or E-2 license holder, without providing same educational and training qualifications to perform at this level. Our current laws allow these individuals to petition the Electrical Work Examining Board to sit for the E-1 exam if they are able to demonstrate the experience and qualifications to do so.

I agree with the determination of the Electrical Work Examining Board and the Department of Consumer Protection that a limited PV-1 or PV-2 license holder should not be allowed to perform complete working photovoltaic system installations without the assistance of an unlimited E-1 license holder and ask that you please consider the safety of the public and oppose this bill. Thank you for your time.