

**Testimony of Brien Balavender
B & J Construction Company, Inc.**

Before Committee on Labor and Public Employees

**SB 987 – An Act Requiring Community Workforce Agreements
for Construction Projects at the Connecticut State University
System**

March 1, 2011

Good afternoon, my name is Brien Balavender, owner of B & J Construction Company of New Britain. I am a small business owner, usually just myself and one other person working on CT's underground infrastructure – sewer and water lines in the Central CT area. My work most often goes unnoticed until there is a problem with water main breaks, or businesses or homes have no access to water. I have been in business for 37 years, with the past two years being the toughest to navigate economically.

I strongly oppose SB 987, An Act Requiring Community Workforce Agreements for Construction Projects at the Connecticut State University System because it contradicts the cornerstones of the American principles of equal opportunity and public education.

I am a graduate of CCSU, graduating with a degree in Business Administration in 1977. While at CCSU, I was taught that American public education system is intended to provide equal opportunity for all Americans to get a solid education and move forward in life. I have also worked as a contractor at CCSU on various small excavations and sewer connections. I have also worked at UCONN on a water main project.

If SB 987 is enacted, as a graduate of CCSU and qualified contractor to work at CCSU, I would be prohibited from even bidding on CCSU or other state university projects. I would be unable to meet the Community Workforce Agreements standards as a small businessman.

The American tenet of equal opportunity at a publicly funded, taxpayer –based, state university would shift off into oblivion for all those unable to meet the Community Workforce Agreement.

This is because the basis of such agreements requires compliance with a pre-negotiated trade labor contract. However, B&J and others not signatory to the

trade labor contracts, already have their own individual work practices underscored by the principles of free enterprise.

While the trade practices may be no less admirable, the idea of imposing pre-negotiated contract standards that B&J was not a part of negotiating, is not based on free enterprise. As owner of B&J, I would not require another subcontractor to agree to all of my work processes. Each contractor and subcontractor establishes their own work practices.

Financially SB 987 requiring a Community Workforce Agreement with a labor organization on a state university project is a fiscal slap in the face to Connecticut taxpayers who pay for state university projects.

The proposed Community Workforce Agreement provision of SB 987 would be a government-mandated, anti-competitive arrangement that is unnecessary, much too expensive, and counterproductive. This would be a terrible misuse of taxpayer money as Connecticut struggles to overcome a \$3.7 billion deficit.

To quote the late President John F. Kennedy:

All of us do not have equal talent, but all of us should have an **equal opportunity** to develop our talents.

I thank the Committee for your time and consideration.