



## INTERNATIONAL UNION OF OPERATING ENGINEERS

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Testimony of Jerram Delahunty, Heavy Equipment Operator  
In opposition of SB 990  
An Act Concerning the Prevailing Rate of Wages  
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Good Evening Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Jerram Delahunty, and I live at 381 Flanders Rd. in Southington, CT 06489 and I'm here to testify in opposition of SB 990 on behalf of my brother and sister construction workers here in Connecticut that rely on Prevailing Wage to support their family now and in the future.

Connecticut's prevailing wage law means more than just a higher wage rate. It means having health and pension benefits; a return on the taxpayers' investment in public construction projects; comprehensive training; and safe worksites. As someone who spent over ten years working for non-union contractors, when I was sometimes on prevailing wage projects and other times I was not, my personal story is a good example of the important distinction between union contractors who pay the prevailing wage and the non-union contractors who sometimes do and most of the time don't.

I took a job with a non-union contractor when I was younger trying to break in to the construction industry. When I started, I received very little industry training, I earned a low wage for the difficult work I performed and my health benefits were barely satisfactory. If the contractor I worked for shutdown a job, I lost my benefits until the next job started.

Safety is a priority with Local 478 and is sometimes overlooked in the construction industry. Our contractors provide us with the appropriate protective gear and hardhats to ensure that we are safe at the jobsite. I am no longer vulnerable to the dangers on a construction job as I was when I worked for a non-union contractor. The quality of work of our public construction projects is superior and I work with a highly skilled professional team of workers. Increasing the prevailing wage threshold from where they currently are would reverse many of the gains the construction industry has made in workplace safety over the past two decades.

Moreover, workers like me who are earning the prevailing wage become contributors to the local economies. We are the people who will spend our earnings at the local supermarkets, auto dealerships, restaurants and retail stores. We will invest our wages in local charities and our parishes. We are the people who will not only provide a better future for our own families, but also for our respective communities.

After joining the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 478, my life changed for the better. I honed my skills with on the job training and significantly benefited from other industry experience, including 40 hours of Hazmat training and I also, recently received my Connecticut Crane license. When I first came to work for Local 478, I only had bobcat skills. Today, I am a highly skilled heavy equipment operator. The prevailing wage has enabled me to own a home in Southington, drive a reliable car, and more importantly, build a better and more stable future for me and my wife and our son.

I understand that there will always be some people who oppose the prevailing wage laws and criticize the unions. However, if they take the time to fully appreciate how it has improved my life and the lives of a countless number of other construction workers, I am confident they will realize the benefits the prevailing wage has had, and will continue to have, on thousands of Connecticut residents and their communities.

On behalf of the hardworking men and women of Local 478 of Hamden, CT and the construction workers across the state; Please oppose any attempts to weaken the state's prevailing wage law.

Thank you