

# International Union of Operating Engineers

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## Testimony in favor of S.B. 549, An Act Concerning Crane and Hoisting Operators

Good afternoon, Senator Hartley, Representative Dargan and the honorable members of the Public Safety Committee. My name is David D'Ostilio. I am the instructor supervisor with the International Union of Operating Engineers, a Labor Organization that represents over 3,500 Heavy Equipment Operators in Connecticut. I am here today to testify in favor of Senate Bill 549, An Act Concerning Crane and Hoisting Operators.

Modern Hoisting Equipment enables the construction and maintenance of all of the office and factory buildings, housing units and related work that our society relies on. We see this equipment every day as it is used to build all types of projects above and below the surface. This equipment, works within inches of construction workers doing many tasks, some within inches of the pipes that supply gas, water, high voltage electricity, and communication lines, and in close proximity to pedestrian and car traffic on our sidewalks and highways. Working in this type of environment makes accidents inevitable, with some of them causing serious injury or the loss of life.

The Connecticut Legislature recognized the potential for dangers that came with heavy equipment operating in 1980, when it began regulating the operation of cranes in the state by licensing operators and requiring cranes to be registered and inspected. Again in 2003 the Legislature passed H.B.6545 a bill requiring that an operator have a hoisting license to operate heavy equipment that can lift over 5 tons and reach more than 32 feet. In simple terms, this law regulates the operation of excavators in the 45,000 pound and up class, large forklifts and pay loaders that can lift more than 10,000 pounds. I do not feel that these regulations go far enough in ensuring the safety of construction workers or the public. As the law is currently written, any one at least 18 years of age paying 25 dollars and providing a passport size photograph without prior training or experience can operate a crane or a piece of hoisting equipment with little or no training or supervision.

In closing, I wish to point out that in the State of Connecticut people need to be tested prior to receiving a learner's permit to drive a car and of course be trained and tested

before receiving a driver's license. In trades such as electricians, plumbers and elevator workers they are required to be part of a registered apprenticeship program before they become a licensed professional. This is done, in the non union sector as well as the union sector. Being 18 years old and paying 25 dollars anyone can walk onto any construction site in the state, including those that are on city streets or on interstate highways, and operate a piece of equipment that will, lift extremely heavy objects, work within inches of other workers and on streets containing unseen gas and water mains and high voltage electric cables. Operating of this equipment is as safety sensitive as electrical, plumbing and elevator work. I believe that a person should be trained properly to operate this type of equipment and work in the vicinity of other workers and the general public. Implementing a register apprenticeship program to acquire these licenses would insure that the proper training is accomplished. These licenses should be regulated as a matter of public policy. SB 549 is the way to accomplish this in a minimally intrusive manner, therefore I encourage that this committee act favorably on it.