



FOUNDATION FOR FAIR CONTRACTING OF CONNECTICUT, INC.

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Commerce Committee Public HRG March 6, 2012 HB 5340

Chairman LeBeau, Chairman Berger, members of the Commerce committee. Thank you for holding a public hearing on House Bill 5340, An Act Establishing An Energy-Related Jobs Task Force.

My name is Kimberly Glassman. I am the Director of the Foundation for Fair Contracting. We are a non-profit labor-management organization, which monitors public-construction projects to promote compliance with Connecticut's labor laws.

Some of the workers and contractors I represent are those whose crafts include HVAC installation, heat and frost insulation, window replacement and installation, and roofing work. The construction industry is undoubtedly one of the hardest hit industries in this economic downturn.

States just aren't investing in their infrastructure at the level necessary to stabilize construction careers. Unemployment in the building trades is at a staggering rate of 40%, with some trades feeling unemployment at rates above 50%.

With House Bill 5340, we have the opportunity to explore new and innovative ways to put this highly skilled, trained and eager workforce back on a project.

I urge this taskforce to include the Workforce Investment Board in order to establish clear pathways to training and jobs for under-employed and displaced workers. We need to ensure that this taskforce develops certification and quality training standards for retrofit workers.

The only way we can ensure that an Energy-Related Workforce is successful is to hinder outsourcing. Wage standards, apprenticeship standards and green building certifications are just a few criteria this taskforce can require in order to dis-incentivize the hiring of out-of-state or under-trained contractors and workers to perform these retrofits. If we're going to take the time and resources to develop a retrofitting program, if we're going to invest tax payer dollars in creating an energy-efficiency workforce then we must make sure that the jobs created don't become poverty jobs. We must make sure that the jobs created from this proposal aren't

minimum wage jobs. And we must make sure that the jobs created from any retrofitting program go to Connecticut companies and Connecticut workers.

Homeowners and commercial property owners will benefit most from keeping the retrofitting work local. Creating a local economy is the most advantageous way to promote development in distressed communities.

The Foundation for Fair Contracting supports this proposal with one recommendation: to focus the intention of the task force to exploring ways to increase the volume of residential and commercial building retrofits in Connecticut. Since there are strong examples for how to develop these programs, and a foundation to build upon, the process towards putting more people to work will be expedited if we work towards this specific goal.

We believe that by creating a coalition between community groups, environmental advocacy organizations and the building trades, we are taking on a new endeavor and creatively exploring long-term job creation.

Sincerely,



Kimberly Glassman
Director