



## INTERNATIONAL UNION OF OPERATING ENGINEERS

Local 478, 1965 Dixwell Avenue, Hamden, Connecticut 06514

Craig Metz  
Business Manager

Phone (203) 288-9261  
Fax (203) 281-3749

Testimony of Nate Brown

Referral Manager and COPE Director IUOE Local 478

For the Labor and Public Employees Committee

March 13, 2012

Good afternoon, Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski and the other Honorable members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Nate Brown and I am the Referral Manager and COPE Director for the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 478, a labor organization that represents over 3,000 members and their families in Connecticut.

I am here today to testify in opposition of SB Bill 5401

### ***AN ACT CONCERNING LEASEBACKS AND THE PREVAILING WAGE THRESHOLD.***

Prevailing Wage is a complex issue. The Connecticut Statute, CGS 31-53, was originally passed in 1937 to promote several public purposes:

- 1) To prevent public construction projects from destabilizing local construction markets by protecting local contractors and the resident labor force from imported contractors and/or labor, thus preserving the local wage structure.
- 2) To assure that a skilled labor force of local residents will exist to provide quality craftsmanship for local projects.
- 3) To provide employment stability in the notoriously cyclical construction industry.

In times of economic stress, it is easy to look at eliminating programs and laws that are thought to raise costs. There is a real cost in doing so, that is paid by real people and society in general. Changing prevailing wage laws would result in cutthroat competitiveness in contracting, increased workforce turnover, a decline in the skill base of the construction labor market, and the entry into the local market of large out of state contractors bringing in their own low paid workforce.

I speak today as a Connecticut Union representative. What that means to me is that I, like you, represent real people who are working for a better life for themselves and their families in the State of Connecticut. I was not raised to believe that the United States stood only for the ability to purchase



goods and services at the lowest possible price, regardless of the cost to people and society. I was raised to believe that the United States stands for the opportunity to better yourself and your family. That the government should work for the greater good, not the bottom line. This is not the first time that the prevailing wage debate has come before your committee and the legislature, and I am sure that this will not be the last time either. Prevailing wage accomplishes what it was meant to, and always has. What has been proposed by the anti-union, anti-prevailing wage folks have a very real cost for the government, the construction industry, and most of all, for the Connecticut residents who build these projects.

Thank you