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February 21, 2013

TO: Senator Paul Doyle, Co-Chairman
Representative David Baram, Co-Chairman
Members of the General Law Committee

FROM: Susan Loin, Executive Director

RE: HB 5149 - An Act Concerning Testing and Licensing of Home Improvement Contractors

The Remodeling Contractors Association is the Connecticut chapter of the National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI). Our members are remodeling contractors throughout the State of Connecticut who take their trade very seriously and have the highest concern for homeowner's. As a member of the Remodeling Contractors Association, they must adhere to a strict code of ethics. Our association is so confident that our members are professional that if a homeowner has a complaint against one of our members, we will mediate a solution for them.

We know that the Dept. of Consumer Protection receives many complaints about contractors that are not upstanding businessmen or tradesmen and do financial harm to homeowners. Our members want this changed. It is rare that you find a group of professionals who are willing to go above and beyond what is required of them by the State. They are willing to take tests and continue educating themselves when they could just as easy do nothing and still keep their jobs. This has a lot to say for those remodeling contractors who support this bill.

The HIC registration has been around for many years and some may argue that all that is needed is that the DCP spend more money to educate the consumer. They may even suggest pulling back money from the general fund to pay for this education. The problem with this is that even educated consumers who knew they had to hire a registered contractor have been taken. We cannot expect all homeowners to be educated in carpentry, structural integrity, architectural design, etc. That is why they hire a remodeling contractor. So just exactly what consumer education is being suggested is questionable.

We believe that by licensing contractors we can solve several problems that currently exist.

- Shabby work done by a contractor who meant well but was never trained properly. Ask many building inspectors across the State what they find on some of the jobs and they will tell you that the contractor did not build to code because they did not know the code.
- Contractors who lose money because a homeowner won't pay because the contractor did not follow the Home Improvement Act to every detail. People who start out in business do not realize all that is involved in making contracts.
- People who are not serious about being a contractor but just want a way to pull in some quick money will be deterred from frauding homeowners since they will not want to study to take the tests.
- Homeowners are usually skeptical about hiring contractors because they do not know what contractor is good or bad. The State can protect its own citizens by giving them a way to

determine if they want to hire one contractor over another. They will learn that a licensed contractor is one who has been tested and passed just like a electrician or a lawyer.

- Other States have background checks for those seeking a contractor's license. Many times contractors are in direct contact with children or women who are alone. It has some reassurance to know that the State has already checked out the person who is coming into my house daily.

We are looking at this bill as an opportunity for those entering the construction field to learn more and be more successful when they do start a business. Our code of ethics state that our members must "*refrain from any act intended to restrain trade or suppress competition.*" Our association was set up for "contractors to help other contractors succeed". The National Association of the Remodeling Industry offers many educational webinars, podcast and direct training to help contractors keep up to date with the latest technologies and designs. We offer our members meetings once a month for the purpose of educating them. Many people getting started in this field would find all the help they needed for becoming successful in the trade.

The following States have licensing in place: (this is not as exhaustive list)

- Massachusetts,
- New York City
- New York State
- Alaska, Florida,
- Lousiana
- Minnesota
- Utah,
- Virginia
- California

These states use an online testing company so the testing is already in place and has been vetted by many contractors.

The remodeling contractors that are here today consider this so important that they took off time from their jobs to be here, to let you know that the time has finally come for remodeling contractors getting licensed; licensed for the benefit of homeowners, licensed for the benefit of those who want to start their careers in this trade and licensed for the remodeling contractor that wants to continually improve his skills which benefits his customers.