



**TO: Honorable Members of the General Law Committee**

**FROM: Connecticut Alarm & Systems Integrators Association**

**RE: Concerns with HB-5335 (Background Checks For Security Systems Installers)**

**DATE: March 11, 2014**

The Connecticut Alarm & Systems Integrators Association (CASIA) is a state trade association comprised of security industry professionals working to protect lives and property through responsible use of electronic security, fire, and integrated alarm systems.

Regarding House Bill 5335, *"An Act Concerning Criminal History Records Checks For Residential Security Systems Installers, Servicers And Repairers"* while CASIA recognizes and appreciates the intent behind legislation such as this to provide for mandated background checks, CASIA has significant concerns with both the drafting of this bill and the real impacts of such legislation, and therefore respectfully opposes HB-5335.

CASIA and its members take all matters of security and life safety extremely seriously. It is our business to protect persons and property, residents and businesses, throughout our state. In doing so, we strive to hold ourselves and our members to the highest standards and best industry practices. This includes pre-screening employees and technicians performing security system installation, service and repair work. However, CASIA raises several points of concern in opposing the bill as currently written.

CASIA is concerned that the bill as currently written has a large loophole for offenders to get through and essentially would render the legislation meaningless. In the state of Connecticut, the following electrical license classes are allowed to do alarm, security, home theater and computer networking in residential applications: L-5; L-6; C-5; C-6; T-1; T-2; E-1; and E-2. The limitation is by system voltage, a high voltage electrician can (and does) do residential security installations. Cable companies offering wireless battery operated systems are currently except from any license law. Therefore, this law would have no effect upon ANY company offering wireless security services. It appears as though the intent of HB-5335 was to create a layer or overlay that would be required for solely for entry-level "residential" (three family or less) work. Each person would have to pass a security background check before they did work in residential applications. Note that in other states (i.e. Massachusetts) a background check is required for ANY work in the security field. Therefore, under HB-5335, no person by virtue of a record would

be denied employment in the electrical field, just not in the SECURITY field. In addition, if the legislation only requires the L class license to have the background check, the C class would duck under the radar. (C class is currently the most sought after license)

Furthermore, in addition to the initial check as contemplated in this legislation, in order to be effective, ongoing checks also need to be considered. For example, a biennial renewal should be required where the applicant would attest to not having been convicted of a crime of moral turpitude etc. since the last renewal.

CASIA also has concerns and questions about the ability of the state to expeditiously process any background checks. What would be the process for an applicant securing the background check? Would this be done solely through the State Police, or also allowed through a private independent agency (i.e. American Screening)? As employers, CASIA members receive responses on state and federal background checks in less than 4 hours utilizing current private providers. How long will the background check results take through state Police, at what cost and will fingerprinting be necessary (which would add even more turnaround time)? If a private agency, would this need some method of certifying that it is approved by the state? If so, would such certification need to be renewed? How often?

CAISA members also have concerns regarding the timing of any required background checks. Perhaps applicants should be responsible for securing their own background check certification PRIOR to applying for employment a business. Therefore, any legislation addressing this issue of background screening for security systems professionals and installers should contain provisions that permit private citizens to personally request their own criminal background check, on the grounds that they are seeking employment in the electronic security field. This would eliminate most if not all of the questions and problems associated with the timing and expense of the background check for a new hire; and what happens if the background check comes back "dirty" after someone is hired. This would be similar to the concept of being financially "pre-qualified" prior to going to a real estate office to find a home.

Additional questions that CASIA raises regarding the proposed legislation are as follows:

Why does this legislation limit the requirement to technicians working in residential buildings of one-to-three dwelling units? Why just residential? Does this mean that a criminal background check is not required for a technician installing a security or fire system in a school or child daycare ? What is the rationale here?

On its face, the wording of HB-5335 requires the background checks for new E & L class license applicants only. Are existing license-holders "grandfathered" and therefore not subject to this requirement?

Why does this proposed bill only mention E & L class licensed technicians? Does it seek to exclude other license-holders (such as T & C-class, as well as non licensed wireless companies) from performing residential security system service and/or installation work? What about others seeking to provide residential security services?

Because there are other persons in the employment of the alarm installation/service company that may have access to sensitive information or knowledge regarding customers' systems or account information, is there any reason why other employees would not be required to have a background check as well?

Until these questions can be answered, such answers can be thoroughly vetted by industry professionals and others impacted, and legislation is drafted to take into account the many questions, concerns and intentions of such legislation, a bill on this issue should not move forward.

Finally, CASIA has concerns and believes that the underlying statute being amending by this legislation is currently inoperative, as it our understanding that the Department of Labor has not set up the limited apprentice program referenced therein.

Therefore, CASIA respectfully asks members of the General Law Committee to reject the current version of HB-5335. If the legislature is truly intent on addressing this issue in the future, CASIA suggests that industry stakeholders be consulted and included as part of any conversations, and CASIA would be happy to serve as an ongoing resource to the legislature in such an endeavor.

Thank you for your consideration of CASIA's comments.

