

STEVE BASSO

PLUMBING * HEATING * A/C

83 Brookfield Ave. Bridgeport, CT 06610
Phone (203)335-0224 Fax (203)331-1561
CT Licenses 281249, #394664, #10074, #4388

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Senator Doyle and Representative Baram and Members of the General Law Committee:

My name is Scott Basso; I am a Partner in Steve Basso Plumbing Heating & A/C LLC located in Bridgeport Connecticut. I am also a resident of Shelton. I am here in support of SB 268 and HB 5454.

My brother and I are second generation business owners of a firm started by our father in 1974. We have attempted to grow our business over the years by providing excellent service delivered by qualified, licensed technicians who care greatly for the clients they serve. Our attempts at growth have always come at great expense. We constantly recruit and screen candidates who can help us meet our goals. The results though have always been a struggle. Current license ratios have held us back from hiring good people who could become tomorrow's technicians. These candidates often had completed their education requirements and had many times, years of experience but were never enrolled in the apprenticeship program. We would be approached by men and women who had licenses or experience in other States that could not have either their experience counted towards the apprenticeship program or their license recognized putting them at square 1 on the road towards becoming a revenue source for our firm. Ratio relief has not been the answer.

The decision to hire an apprentice is an import one. We are charged with preparing them to become independent service and installation technicians. It may take 4 years for a technician to become eligible for their license. That is an eternity for an 18 year old exiting trade school or a 22 year old who may wish to start a family. Apprentices can and do have a change of heart about their career direction. We have had apprentices on the door step of licensure become a fireman, enlist in the military, start an unrelated business etc. over the years only to leave us back at the beginning of filling a new licensed spot.

We have an opportunity today that is unprecedented for the State of Connecticut. The Natural Gas Expansion plan can provide a steady stream of job creation. The current projection is to perform up to 20,000 oil to gas conversions per year but there isn't a legal way to complete it with the existing workforce in place. Nor are there enough service technicians available to perform the maintenance of the heating equipment in the near future. All it will take is a couple of accidents to derail the public's acceptance of the conversion.

With a 1 to 1 ratio in the field we can economically and safely perform these conversions. The apprentices will be indoctrinated in all aspects of proper system design and setup. They will be exposed more than any other generation of technician the importance of

high efficiency heating systems, their operation and benefits. As the rollout happens and the years pass those apprentices will now become the servicers of those heating systems. Being comfortable with the newer technology will continue on through their career as they will be more likely to recommend environmentally friendly heating systems.

We as business owners hold the ultimate responsibility for our technicians and the work they perform. We are keenly aware of the need to produce qualified technicians. By reducing the ratio to a one to one basis we all benefit from the increase in well paying jobs, productivity gains and stability in the workforce.

I would like to add that as a company grows in size and it doesn't become less able to administer an apprenticeship program. The one to one ratio should extend entirely through its employment rolls. There isn't any reasonable reason that you would need to employ 9 more Journeymen to hire your next apprentice after your fifth licensed technician. That is a barrier to growth and an unfair disadvantage for firms of that size and larger.

Sincerely,

Scott Basso
Managing Member