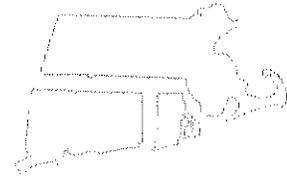




**Independent Electrical Contractors
of New England, Inc.**



**Testimony
Lisa Stevens, CAE
Executive Director
Independent Electrical Contractors of New England
Before the
General Law Committee
March 11, 2014**

The Independent Electrical Contractors of New England (IEC-NE) strongly supports SB-412, “AAC The Enforcement of Certain Occupational Licensing Statutes”, which is a pro-consumer, pro-industry and pro-public safety bill that will strengthen our state’s occupational licensing laws by specifying, clarifying and enhancing the responsibilities of the Commissioner of Consumer Protection and examining boards regarding occupational licensing enforcement.

SB-412 will allow the state Department of Consumer Protection and the examining boards to vigorously enforce the state’s occupational licensing laws by clarifying their roles and responsibilities and, perhaps most significantly, also allows for the issuance of a “stop work order” when appropriate, a powerful tool to help ensure compliance.

Allowing unlicensed contractors to operate in Connecticut hurts the entire electrical industry by exposing workers and consumers to potentially unsafe situations. Apprentices, who should have been given credit for hours on the job, are unfairly penalized by unscrupulous contractors who fail to register them as apprentices. Persons who perform high voltage electrical work without the necessary training and education, are putting themselves and others at considerable risk. Licensing laws are designed to ensure that individuals performing certain work have the training and skills needed to perform work safely and consistent with state building codes as well as federal and state safety laws, and as such must be vigorously enforced. SB-412 provides the tools and mechanisms necessary to help ensure that enforcement.

Unfortunately, due to budgetary and other reasons, historically there have been an inadequate number of personnel available for enforcement measures, and sometimes confusion between the duties of the Commissioner and the examining boards, and thus the laws are ineffective in deterring contractors from operating in Connecticut without the proper licenses and apprenticeship registrations. Legislation such as SB-412 would help change course and further empower the Commissioner and the boards to ensure compliance when issues are brought to their attention. Unfortunately, we are aware of instances where contractors have operated in Connecticut without benefit of licensure and shrugged off the penalty because it was unlikely that anyone would have the opportunity to enforce the laws against them.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments, and IEC urges passage of the bill.

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

I am a Department Head of the Heating and Air Conditioning Department at Platt Regional Vocational Technical School in Milford Connecticut, one of 11 Connecticut Technical Trade Schools with an HVAC program. I reside in Trumbull, Connecticut. My duties as Department Head include instruction and preparation of 14 to 18 year old high school students. We prepare students to be employable upon graduation. This is an educational alternative available to young men and woman that are interested in a career, where they can serve society and the local community by working with their hands. They are employable when they graduate.

Heating and Air Conditioning is a vocation that requires a license to practice in the state of Connecticut. Apprentices must register with the Connecticut Department of Labor, and work with a Master Licensed Technician for 8,000 hours (4 years) and receive 720 hours of trade related education to be eligible to sit for the S (heating) license exam. They receive the 720 hours of trade related instruction during their high school years in the Technical High School System.

Platt Tech and the other Technical High Schools have available a Work Based Learning program. Students, during their junior and senior years, are allowed to go to work with selected and approved contractors in our area. Students must be responsible, with good grades to be eligible for this program. The company and student arrangement is approved by the parents, employer, HVAC department, the WBL coordinator for the school, the principal and the school district.

I am writing to you today because after all of the above approvals, the student must have an interview with a representative from the Department of Labor for an apprenticeship card and induction into the apprenticeship program. There is supposed to be a Pre-apprenticeship program for high school students in the WBL program. However the employer's business is charged for a full time apprentice position. With the Apprenticeship ratio at its current level, this is a problem for the employer as they might, and many times do need that apprentice slot for a full time employee.

This school year I had one local HVAC contractor that wanted to hire one of my students decline to hire that student after two months of the extra time and paperwork involved in the Apprenticeship Ratio Relief Program. Another student was finally hired, interviewed and given a card after 2 months of attempts to get him registered. The end result is that this employer could not get the student on board and working when he needed him. The student will be able to work in the future when the company gets busy again.

Because of the above reasons I support H.B. No 5454 and S.B. 268. An increase in the available apprenticeship positions will help the economy by allowing companies to grow, create more jobs – ultimately reducing CT unemployment rates. However, most importantly from my position – it will keep these kids in CT. We are paying to educate them – why push them to another state upon graduation because they have a more favorable hiring ratio with more opportunities available.

Thank You,


Joe Pellecchia
HVAC Department Head
Platt Tech