

TESTIMONY
GENERAL LAW PUBLIC HEARING – MARCH 11, 2014 – 4:30 P.M.

RE: **S.B. 412 – AAC ENFORCEMENT OF CERTAIN OCCUPATIONAL LICENSING STATUTES**

SUBMITTED BY: Joyce A. Wojtas, Mechanical Contractors Association of Connecticut (MCAC)

The MCAC strongly supports S.B. 412 which is the result of many months of meetings and discussions by both **union and non-union representatives** of the licensed trades and other interested parties. To the best of my knowledge, this bill is strongly supported by **most licensed trades and the contractors who employ them.**

S.B. 412 does not make any drastic changes to the law. In the interest of public safety, it simply reinstates the licensing boards' participation in the hearing and penalty process for violators of the licensing laws. This participation existed until 2007, when a bill was passed, initiated by the DCP, to institute criminal penalties for serious violations of the licensing laws, however, it also inadvertently disengaged the boards from participation in the process. Some interested parties, were told by DCP that this would be corrected in a future session. This covers the occupational licensing boards established in C.G.S. Chapter 393.

That move on the checkerboard of the bureaucracy may not have so inadvertent, because simultaneously bills had been introduced and raised in 2007 and subsequent years to eliminate the licensing boards in their entirety. After being in this building for 37 years as both a legislator and lobbyist, I tend to be a conspiracy theorist and I do believe that the action taken in 2007 was the first step in elimination of the boards.

The occupational licensing boards are a great asset to the State of Connecticut and its citizens. They are made up of **both union and non-union journey persons and contractors** and members of the public. They are **volunteers who do not get any "per diem allowance"** but can get mileage expense when they attend meetings. Many members do not even claim mileage expenses. The significant value of the boards is that the members are experts in the trades they represent; a value that would be "cost prohibitive" to the state. They have the **required expertise in these trades to determine when and if a violation has occurred, the level of the violation and inherent threat to the safety of the public** and the appropriate fine that should be levied against the violator. They are serving, on their own time, to protect the **integrity of the occupational licensing laws that govern the day-to-day lives of more than 40,000 licensed trades persons and contractors in the state.** This in turn protects the safety of the consumer and the public as a whole. The boards should be totally involved in the process.

During these difficult economic times, cheating is on the rise because consumers often look for the cheapest way out, which can not only be foolish, but also dangerous. **The cheater not only underbids the legitimate contractor, but also does not provide workers' compensation or unemployment compensation coverage for its employees or pay the taxes due the state.** Swift action that hits the cheaters in the "pocketbook" will go a long way to prevent them from endangering lives. **The licensing boards are ready, willing and able to help the DCP in its mission to keep the public safe and their participation is more than cost effective.**

There is one change that I believe should be made in this bill: In Section (2), Subsection (b) Line 44, after the word "section," insert **"provided such violation is determined not to be a bona fide dispute between persons engaged in any trade or craft as described in subsection (a) of this section."** This change was discussed and endorsed by the group that worked on this bill and is currently in Subsection (a) of this section. In the construction industry, disputes between trades do occur and this language will eliminate the shutting down a job because of a dispute that has another avenue for resolution.

Please allow the Occupation Licensing Boards to participate in the process by supporting this bill and the amendment favorably. Thank you for your consideration.

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