

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

My name is Christopher Artz and I am a senior at Platt Regional Vocational Technical High School in Milford Connecticut, one of 11 Connecticut Technical Trade schools with an HVAC program. I currently live in West Haven, Connecticut. As a student, I am being prepared and taught to experience what it's like to work with an extraneous amount of tools and equipment, troubleshooting methods/ tasks, along with information on challenges to expect after graduation.

The heating and air conditioning trade is a combination of multiple trades, and thrives on thousands of hours in the field to become proficient enough for employment after graduation. The Work Based Learning Program is a vital program to help students gain experience with a trade-related company before graduation. Two days a week with juniors, and three days a week with seniors you are able to go out on a shop day, be excused from school, and gain experience out in the field with a licensed technician as your mentor.

With firsthand experience with this program, I can honestly say that as of right now, it was an absolute waste of my time. I was recently employed as an apprentice, and was eager to gain experience for my trade. I was not informed on how long the process will take for me to go out and work with my licensed technician, nor an interview with the department head of labor in Connecticut. I was told that there were no available spots to be filled within my company, when at the time of the interview with the manager of the business 2 months beforehand, I had been told that this program was new to him and I would become their first pre apprentice. This 2 month process included no contact from my employer about further information with this apprentice program. I don't blame this on the employer, but the Work Based Learning's unstructured program.

As time went on, I was able to get information with my HVAC instructor at school that this prolonged process was because of the Apprentice Ratio Relief Program. This current ratio is too low, and certainly not enough. This program should be increased so the amount of apprentices being able to learn will elevate, as well as the amount of licensed technicians to put those apprentices under their wing.

With this information, along with my experience with this program, I support H.B. No 5454 and S.B. 268. There will be an increase of apprenticeship positions to aid the economy, become more educated, and more importantly create more blue-collar jobs for the future workforce of America.

Thank You,

Chris Artz