

TO: Labor and Public Employees Committee Members

FROM: Eric M. D'Eramo

SUBJECT: *AN ACT CONCERNING APPRENTICESHIP RATIOS (HB 5454)*

Good afternoon Senator Holder-Winfield, Representative Tercyak and members of the committee. My name is Eric D'Eramo, and I am the Director of Business Operations and Resources for Environmental Control, a company employing 195 people. In addition, I carry an active State of Connecticut, Sheet Metal Contractor's license and I am President of the Connecticut Heating & Cooling Contractors Association. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter of "**Apprenticeship Ratios**".

As an active, licensed contractor involved in the heating & cooling industry here in Connecticut, I would like to express my strong **support** for the raised House Bill 5454. My understanding is House Bill 5454 pertains to the number of apprentices or helpers a company may hire and register with the State of Connecticut.

Currently, the **hiring ratio** penalizes a company as it grows by reducing the number of apprentices it can hire. This Bill will improve the ratio slightly for smaller companies and be consistent with the job site ratio of 1:1.

Over the last several years, the Connecticut trade schools both public and private have done a good job of modifying and improving upon their curriculum in an effort to produce better qualified graduates to meet the needs of employers. In addition, many more employers are involving themselves in the schools through career days, work-study and shadowing programs. The Department of Education is investing money on radio and internet commercials encouraging teens to attend the technical high schools. The classrooms continue to be full. However, upon graduation and feeling a great sense of accomplishment about their achievement they face **disappointment** when they apply for a job. They are told by these same employers they can not hire them due to ratio restrictions. HB 5454 can correct this problem. In my company alone I have several employees who invested time & money to learn the heating & cooling trade. They are currently pushing a broom, loading trucks or handling inventory while sitting on an internal apprenticeship **wait list!**

There continues to be a shortage of qualified Tradesmen here in Connecticut and developing a farm team is critical for the future of our businesses. It is important to understand that these students represent our future workforce and we must continue to transfer to them the knowledge of our master mechanics. We must take advantage of the opportunity before us to increase the number of skilled Tradesmen in our labor pool.

In closing, I urge each of you to **support** this piece of legislation. In doing so, you will be helping Connecticut take steps towards ensuring **opportunities for apprentices** and providing a mechanism to allow the contractors to **create jobs** as well! Thank you for your time and I welcome any questions you may have.