

FOUNDATION FOR FAIR CONTRACTING OF CONNECTICUT, INC.

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Labor and Public Employees Committee
Public Hearing

March 11, 2014

Re: HB 5454 - *An Act Concerning Apprenticeship Ratios*

Senator Holder-Winfield, Representative Tercyak, Senator Markley, Representative Smith and members of the Labor Committee,

The Foundation for Fair Contracting of Connecticut (FFC) is a non-profit organization created by labor and management in order to monitor all public works construction projects covered under the Connecticut General Statutes Section 31-53 and the Davis-Bacon Act. We accomplish this by reviewing public documents prepared and/or submitted by the owner and contractor(s). We focus on licensing, proper payment of prevailing wage rates, proper classification of workers and properly administered state apprenticeship standards.

The FFC represents a number of licensable trades and their contractor associations, including the International Union of Elevator Constructors Local 91, the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades District Council 11, and the Sheet Metal Workers International Association Local Union 38 and Local Union 40.

The FFC opposes HB 5454 "*An Act Concerning Apprenticeship Ratios*".

We have concerns with amending the existing regulations pursuant to section 20-332 to specify hiring ratios regarding apprentices, journeymen and contractors.

Before delving into the reasons why changing our apprenticeship ratios is both dangerous and just another ploy to hire cheap labor, it's important to note that we just had this debate, and came to a unanimous resolution.

In 2010, Public Act No. 10-27 (aka SB 133) was written into law. That act is attached hereto for your reference. The public hearing on SB 133 was heard before the General Law Committee on February 16, 2010. Jenn Jennings submitted testimony on behalf of the CT Plumbing, Heating & Cooling Contractors Association indicating that, "This minor change in the law will give plumbing, heating and cooling contractors the ability to expand their businesses and provide more apprenticeship training opportunities for Connecticut's young people. **Clearly this is a win-win** [emphasis added], particularly during these challenging economic times." A copy of Ms. Jennings' testimony is also attached hereto.

What all parties – that is labor and management, union and non-union – agreed to in 2010 is that for the first journeyman there shall be one apprentice, for the second journeyman there shall be a second apprentice and for every three journeymen thereafter there shall be one more apprentice. Right now, for a large crew of seven, we would have five journeymen to three apprentices.

It would be incredibly irresponsible to have a one to one ratio for more than two journeymen. The licensed construction trades can be very dangerous. They install pipes, HVAC, flat glass, elevators and escalators, fire protection, toxic paint materials and electrical wiring. We cannot support proposed legislation that would impede upon a journeymen's ability to properly train an apprentice in a licensed craft. It is crucial that we keep both our apprentices and journeymen safe when working on construction projects.

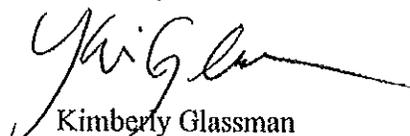
Our licensed journeymen have been through 4-5 year long apprenticeship programs. They are trained in their scope of work. And we depend on them to effectively and thoroughly train the next generation. Many of our journeymen are sitting on the bench themselves, waiting to go back to work to pay their mortgages, support their families, make sure that they and their children maintain their health insurance, and work until they can retire with dignity. We owe these men and women, who went into the construction industry to build a solid career, the opportunity to be a part of and strengthen our middle class.

Apprentices are paid less than journeymen.

Make no mistake about it – the proponents of this bill do not want to increase apprenticeship opportunities. They want to hire cheap labor and keep our journeymen on the bench. They want to underbid our public projects at the expense of people's safety. Connecticut is not suffering from a shortage of skilled workers. We have thousands of journeymen who are capable of training the hundreds upon hundreds of apprentices in our state. And we owe it to our apprentices to make sure that they have the opportunity to be trained enough to become journeymen themselves.

If this proposed legislation were to pass into law, our construction industry would plummet. I strongly urge this committee to vote no on this bill. We need to send a message that we support our journeymen, we support our apprentices, and we believe in safe workplaces for all.

Sincerely,



Kimberly Glassman
Director