

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 moths 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