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February 27, 2015

Raised Bill No. 6808, AAC The Enforcement of Certain Licensing Statutes

Committee on General Law

Members of the Committee on General Law,

My father and I are the owners of Blakeslee Arpaia Chapman, the successor company to the C.W. Blakeslee, founded in 1844. With a history spanning 170 years, we are the oldest construction company in America, and throughout that history, Blakeslee has always been proud to call Connecticut home.

I am writing you today in regard to Raised Bill No. 6808, An Act Concerning Enforcement of Certain Occupational Licensing Statutes. The proposed bill changes how perceived infractions of the licensing law are handled. The changes, aimed primarily at trade licenses, (such as plumbers and electricians), can require projects to be stopped, and hearings to resolve these issues may not occur until 30 days. Further, the bill transfer enforcement responsibility from the department of Consumer Protection to the individual licensing boards.

I do have some experience with Connecticut licensing. I am a licensed engineer in Connecticut. I also hire licensed trade professionals for our work.

Currently, the Department of Consumer Protection investigates allegations of improper practice. In many areas some ground is often covered by more than one discipline, in other areas license holders may feel other trades are performing work that requires a license when in fact it does not. The Department is good at separating work that should have been done with a license and possibly endanger the public and disputes that are simply jurisdictional disputes between different trades.

The purposes of licenses is to protect the general public from faulty work performed by tradesmen who lack the proper skill and training for the task. This an important and necessary function of the government. The purpose of license law is not to protect the work of one trade from other trades. The Department understands the difference. It generally resolves disputes quickly without interruption of the work.

Under the proposed bill, the board would investigate these allegations, with a possible work stoppage of 30 days. In the case of overlapping jurisdiction, the bill does not detail how the boards will coordinate, or how disagreements between them will be resolved. Further, stopping work on a trade for 30 days can shut a project down.

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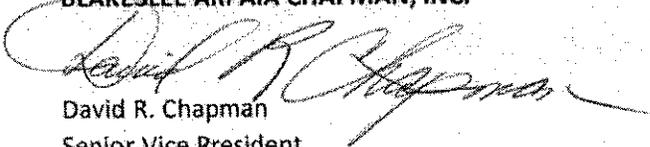
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Connecticut has begun to regain its competitive footing. Making the possibility of long construction delays while boards ironed out disputes, that in most cases, probably do not pose a significant risk to the general public, would be significantly detrimental to our growth as those wishing to build or expand their facilities may very well contemplate locating elsewhere. This would pose a significant risk to the overall economy and therefore the general public.

Under the current system, the Department of Consumer Protection does a good job of protecting the general public from unlicensed work, while umpiring jurisdictional disputes, and providing as little disruption to projects as possible. The proposed bill attempts to fix a problem that does not exist. Such laws generally end up with unintended and undesirable consequences. As Thomas Jefferson stated, the government is best that governs least. The current system works. The bill is not needed. I urge the committee to consider not promoting the bill out of committee.

Thank you

BLAKESLEE ARPAIA CHAPMAN, INC.



David R. Chapman
Senior Vice President