

**TESTIMONY**  
**LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES COMMITTEE**  
**PUBLIC HEARING – TUESDAY, February 17, 2015 – 1:30 P.M. LOB Rm. 2A**

**RE: S.B. 81 - AN ACT CONCERNING JOURNEYMEN AND APPRENTICES**

**SUBMITTED BY: Joyce A. Wojtas, Mechanical Contractors Association of CT**

The Mechanical Contractors Association of Connecticut would like to go on record in opposition to S.B. 81 which increases the apprenticeship ratio for journeymen and contractors to one to five. Construction is classified as a "high-risk safety-sensitive" industry. This classification results in higher workers' compensation costs, mandated continuing education and mandated safety training, etc. This bill will change the makeup of the workforce for all contractors subject to the apprenticeship laws and will replace a highly skilled workforce with people who are learning a trade that takes four to five years of classroom and on the job training prior to testing for a license. This bill will allow work to be performed without appropriate supervision and not only endangering the lives of the workers on the construction site, but the person or persons who will occupy the facility after construction is completed.

This issue has been debated over and over again for many years in the General Law Committee and the Labor Committee. In 2010, Senate Bill 133 passed and became Public Act 10-27. This law established the apprenticeship ratios that are currently on the books for the Electrical, Plumbing, Heating, Piping and Cooling, Sprinkler Fitter, and Sheet Metal Work trades.

The current ratios were not created in a vacuum. It took after many months of meetings held by a committee that included both union and non-union groups and associations. Those **who testified in favor** of S.B. 133 at the General Law Public Hearing on **2/26/10** as indicated in the JF Report included:

- **UA Plumbers & Pipe Fitters Local 777 – Cam Champlin**
- **Steve Basso, CT Heating & Cooling Contractors (CHCC)**
- **Lelah Campo, Associated Builders & Contractors (ABC)**
- **Lisa Hunter, Independent Electrical Contractors of New England**
- **Jen Jennings, CT Plumbing, Heating & Cooling Contractors Association (CHCC)**

The main purpose of the Apprenticeship Training Program is to allow an employer to hire and train apprentices to learn the skills of the trade under the direct supervision of a licensed journey person and to one day become competent/licensed journey persons. The employer receives a tax credit for the registered apprentice. Ratio relief can be granted by the DOL if needed and if the employer is compliant.

The changes in this bill could encourage the small business to lay off licensed persons and replace them with apprentices to save on labor costs. Again, the one to five hiring ratio will endanger the lives of the all workers on the site. This in turn could also endanger the lives of the consumer or the public, especially if the project requires installation of gas lines, any high pressure water or steam lines, chemical lines, electrical lines, and/or the many other installations that require the skills and knowledge of a licensed person.

**The current law is working. We urge you to oppose S.B. 81.**

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