

TESTIMONY – Labor & Public Employees Committee Public Hearing – February 17, 2015 LOB 2A

Re: S.B. 383 - AAC Workforce Participation Thresholds for Public Works Contracts

Submitted by: Joyce A. Wojtas, Mechanical Contractors Assoc. of CT

The Mechanical Contractors Association of Connecticut is opposed to establishing mandatory hiring quotas specified in S.B. 383. This bill will result in increased costs for all projects and eat up scarce bond funds. It will also result in the unintended consequences of discouraging potential bidders on those projects. Note: residents' preference is already established in C.G.S. Sec. 31-52, 31-52a, and 31-52b.

C.G.S. Chapter 814c *Human Rights & Opportunities* currently prohibits discriminatory employment practices by all employers and requires contractors and subcontractors to file affirmative action plans with the state prior to bidding on any contract of \$50,000 or more. In addition to those plans, contractors must comply with a multitude required submissions prior to bidding, after award of a bid, throughout the progress of the project and at the end of the project. In addition, contractors or subcontractors who plan to bid on any state or state-funded project of \$500,000 or more must also pre-qualify to bid, which requires submission of all sorts of documentation and certifications prior to attaining prequalification. Construction of any project is a complex undertaking and adding mandatory hiring quotas to the compliance requirements is beyond reason.

On today's public works, commercial, industrial, institutional and/or educational projects, all construction workers are trained in their various trades of employment. The industry has been classified as "high risk and safety sensitive" and all employees of all contractors on a construction site are required to have extensive and continuous safety training because each worker impacts their fellow workers' lives. A majority of the trades also have apprentice training programs that are four to five years in duration. A mandatory hiring quota is putting the horse before the cart. Today's construction workers are highly trained and skilled people.

Mandating employment quotas of certain groups or classes of people, without considering what will happen to a given contractor's existing workforce is wrong. Numerous construction workers, who were gainfully employed by Connecticut contractors for many, many years, have been out of work throughout these bad economic times the state has experienced. SB 101 requires that 31.9 percent of the contractor's employees have to remain out of work, no longer able to collect unemployment, while the contractor is mandated to hire new employees from two distinct groups of people. This bill is both ridiculous and unconscionable and I urge this committee to defeat it.

Thank you. For additional information, contact me at: joyce.wojtas@outlook.com