

Testimony by Jacqueline Laramée Project Manager
of Network Interiors, Inc.

Before the Labor and Public Employees Committee February 24, 2015
HB 6246 An Act Concerning Labor Agreements and the Governing Bodies of Municipalities

Good afternoon my name is Jacqueline Laramée and I am a Project Manager for Network Interiors, Inc.; a Carpentry business that was established in 1991. We have over 50 employees and take immense pride in the quality of our work. We have a long history of repeat customers which I believe speaks volumes on the legitimacy of our final product.

I am here to voice my support for HB 6246, An Act Concerning Labor Agreements and the Governing Bodies of Municipalities. With so much at stake on large municipal construction projects, it is worth the time to host a public hearing to decide whether or not to use a Project Labor Agreement (PLA).

PLAs are contracts that discriminate against non-union contractors by using specific and unique clauses that are not found on most construction projects. There have been many spirited debates regarding the use of PLAs on public construction jobs including discussions on cost increases, project delays, and the overall quality of the work.

But I am here to discuss how this impacts the worker. The fact is, PLAs are designed to ensure that all of the work on the job is performed by union labor. PLA proponents will cite examples where non-union contractors successfully bid on jobs. These examples however are rare exceptions to the indisputable fact that non-union contractors simply DO NOT bid on PLAs because they would be unable to keep continuity within their crews. They would be forced to hire 70% or more of union labor, the union would delegate which "key personnel" they are able to maintain, and they would have to pay benefits that their people wouldn't be able to use. I know that within our company our benefits entail health insurance, dental and eye care coverage, paid time off, and a matched 401k.

In Connecticut, less than 20% of the construction workforce is union. 15.2% to be exact. This means that 84.8% of construction workers in Connecticut would not be able to work on a job if it was a PLA. This is simply not fair to eliminate over 80% of construction workers from having the opportunity to make a living and provide for their family.

PLA mandates are also particularly harmful towards minority and women owned businesses and their employees. As a woman working in this business and as an employee of a Women Business Enterprise I think it is important to point out that MBE and WBE workers have traditionally been under-represented in unions, and will be further prevented from being given the chance to work and earn a living on a project that uses a PLA.

Finally, PLAs discriminate against local workers who are not part of a union. PLAs claim to help local workers, but they fail to mention that the local workers they reference still have to be part of a union. If you are a "local worker" but work for a non-union contractor, you still will

not be able to work on the project. It is a grave injustice that a resident construction worker, would not have the opportunity to work on a project that his or her tax dollars are going to fund.

In conclusion, I am supportive of HB 6246. I urge the committee to support this bill, and make sure that the proposed use of a PLA receive a public hearing before being signed. Please consider myself and my co-workers when you're voting. As Connecticut residents and as taxpayers, all we're asking for is a chance to be heard.