



Connecticut Chapter

Testimony by Chris Syrek, President of
Associated Builders & Contractors

Before the Judiciary Committee on March 23, 2016

SB 468 – An Act Concerning the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities

Good afternoon Senator Coleman, Representative Tong and Members of the Committee, my name is Chris Syrek; I am the President of Associated Builders and Contractors of Connecticut (CT ABC). CT ABC is a statewide trade association of almost 200 members that represents merit shop contractors. I appreciate the opportunity to speak before the committee today on their behalf.

CT ABC has always been supportive of CHRO's mission in relation to the construction industry. Providing opportunity to small businesses (SBE), minority owned businesses (MBE), and women owned businesses (WBE) is both a benefit to the contractor, and also a benefit to the industry by helping small businesses grow and adding qualified tradesmen into the workforce. That being said, in recent years, the timeliness in which CHRO is able to approve affirmative action plans has become a problem for the industry. It is well documented that there is a serious backlog of unapproved plans that exists within CHRO. There are examples of some contractors either receiving notices on plans that are approved, or in some cases rejected months after a job has already started and even times after a job has been completed. There are obviously not a ton of remedies for a contractor to fix affirmative action goals for hiring if a job is already over.

We believe that SB 468 offers a solution to the problem and urge the members of the Judiciary Committee to support this bill. Section 4 of the bill requires CHRO to either approve, reject or conditionally approve a submitted affirmation action plan within 90 days of submittal or the plan will automatically be deemed approved. 90 days is well within a reasonable amount of time for a plan reviewer to be able to respond to a contractor, and allow them enough time to make any necessary revisions to ensure they are in compliance and meeting the intentions of the program before the job begins. It is worth noting that CHRO is currently required to notify contractors of approvals or disapprovals within 60 days, but there are absolutely no consequences for not doing so, which in part has led to the backlog and lack of responsiveness that exists. It is also worth noting that the consequence for the contractor is the 2% retainage that CHRO holds until the project is approved.

In closing, CT ABC and our members believe that this bill would improve the process for all parties involved. The construction industry would benefit from being able to start jobs with approved plans that they have had ample time to review with CHRO to ensure compliance. This would also ensure that CHRO is able to stay ahead of their workload and not continue the excessive backlogs that currently exist.

We appreciate the opportunity to participate in this public hearing, and thank you for your time and consideration.

Christopher Syrek
President, Associated Builders and Contractors