



Chris Fryxell, President  
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Connecticut Chapter

### Testimony in Support of:

- **S.B. 799 An Act Concerning Workforce Development**
- **H.B. 5001 An Act Ensuring That Students in this State Receive High-Quality Skills Training**

**Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee  
February 5, 2019**

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Good afternoon Chairs Haddad and Haskell, Ranking Members Hall and Hwang, and Members of the Committee. My name is Chris Fryxell and I am the President of Associated Builders and Contractors of Connecticut (CT ABC). CT ABC is a statewide trade association of over 200 members that represents Merit Shop commercial and industrial contractors. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before the committee today on my members' behalf voicing support for **SB 799 An Act Concerning Workforce Development** and **HB 5001 An Act Ensuring That Students in this State Receive High-Quality Skills Training**.

Encouraging workforce development and job training programs is one of the most important topics the legislature will deal with. Much of the discussion in Connecticut revolves around manufacturing which is understandable given our state's rich history in manufacturing; however, it is important that the legislature consider the construction industry when crafting legislation to tackle this problem.

The shortage of skilled labor is particularly severe in the construction industry. It is estimated that 500,000 construction jobs are ready to be filled in the United States right now- more than 40,000 of which are right here in Connecticut. With projected infrastructure spending over the next few years and retiring baby boomers, the shortage of skilled labor is expected to get far worse before it gets better.

"Earn while you learn" apprenticeship programs help individuals learn valuable skills and prepare for a rewarding and lucrative career in construction while avoiding debt that often comes with attending a traditional college or university. Yet, still too few people are exploring a career in construction.

We must do a better job of promoting apprenticeship in construction, removing barriers to training and hiring and developing a pipeline of students exploring a career in the trades.

We should promote careers in the trades earlier in our schools and encourage students to explore the trades, not merely as an “alternative” to a four-year degree, but as a worthy and respectable career path. The concept of “higher education” should not apply only to the learning that occurs in a lecture hall at a college or university, but to any structured education that happens in furtherance of a career.

We should reduce to apprenticeship hiring ratio to 1:1 just as it is on a jobsite. The state’s current hiring ratios are an unnecessary obstacle that are preventing employers from hiring young people interested in a career in construction. At a time when our need for skilled labor is greatest, the state should not create barriers for access to training and employment.

Lastly, just as we provide encouragement to manufacturing training programs we should also support those providers teaching apprenticeship in the construction trades.

As we look forward as a state and a country and seek to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure, we must ensure that the skilled craftsmen are available to perform the necessary work. We urge this committee to recognize the need for skilled labor in the construction industry and to include the trades when developing a plan for improving workforce development in this state.

I thank you for your time and consideration. For follow up I can be reached at 860-818-3720 or [chrisf@ctabc.org](mailto:chrisf@ctabc.org).