

Labor and Public Employees Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6630

AN ACT REQUIRING INDIVIDUALS WHO INSTALL SOLAR ENERGY
Title: SYSTEMS TO COMPLETE AN ELECTRICIAN APPRENTICESHIP.

Vote Date: 3/21/2019

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/21/2019

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Labor and Public Employees Committee.

REASONS FOR BILL:

Currently it is not required for solar energy system installers to complete apprenticeship programs. Substitute Language requires the Commissioner of Consumer Protection to study this issue.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Rep. Mary Mushinsky, Eighty-fifth Assembly District: Ct. faces a tight deadline to improve energy efficiency and switch to clean energy. The timetable to reduce CO2 emissions in order to stop climate change is 12 years according to IPCC scientists. We must concentrate on creating jobs and apprenticeships in the green energy fields. State agencies should work together to create and publicize a green jobs career ladder for lower skilled insulation and weatherization jobs to higher skilled apprenticeships, installers and energy management positions. (HB 5828 which is currently before the Higher Education Committee accomplishes this.) Electricians lose jobs to untrained solar installers who will work for lower wages. Unskilled workers are able to handle site preparation jobs, but should not displace apprentices or professional electricians/carpenters in the technical field of solar energy.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Paul Costello, Director of Apprenticeship and Training, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers : His testimony included data/statistics regarding the Photovoltaic -2 Electrical Apprenticeship program that has been underutilized by the solar industry. Work beyond the scope of the exemption is being completed by unlicensed and unregistered

apprentices. There are twenty-three Photovoltaic Limited Solar License holders and nine of them were originally grandfathered. Thirty-five percent of those licensed are from out of state. Solar photovoltaic systems installed today are larger, intricate and more hazardous than those installed in 2009. This bill provides skilled workers a path to a successful career with opportunity for advancement in renewable energy fields and help reduce energy costs.

Daniel McInerney, Representative, CT Chapter of the National Electrical Contractors

Association: When the Department of Consumer Protection (DCP) created the PB-1 Limited Solar Electric Contractor and PV-2 Limited Solar Electric license requirement in 2009, it was to create a career path in the solar industry. There are 13 PV-1 contractor license holders, 4 from out of state; 10 journeyman license holders, 4 from out of state and less than 10 registered apprentices with the Dept. of Labor. This is not what the DCP had in mind when creating the programs. The industry needs better oversight.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Ed Marrick, Vice President, Policy & Government Relations, Trinity Solar: There is a perception that the industry is not complying with the requirements of the General Statutes. This bill would burden complying businesses with unnecessary additional requirements. Each crew has a Registered Connecticut Electrical Apprentice and a Licensed Connecticut Electrician for ALL work, not just the PV jobs. Solar work consists of various trade jobs including structural, electrical and sometimes even plumbing. This work should be done by the individuals most qualified. Most electricians prefer not to work on roofs since they are not usually trained to do so. This requirement would result in a high turnover of staff and added cost to businesses. It is a substantial burden to find enough available and qualified electricians. It is unclear what problem this bill is trying to solve since safety and code compliance is not an issue. This bill would effectively shut down most solar companies.

James Schwartz, Co-Owner, Independence Solar, LLC: Installing a solar system requires multiple trades, not just electricians. This bill would not improve safety systems. It would have the negative consequences of declining system quality since unqualified workers would be performing non-electrical tasks, increasing costs since electricians can't effectively complete non-electrical tasks, and it would immediately cause a shortage of electrical labor, driving up prices due to scarcity. Projects would also be delayed/canceled. The state would suffer a setback in achieving its climate and clean energy goals.

Reported by: Marie Knudsen

Date: March 26, 2019