SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): -- public hearing of the General Law Committee to order. The first hour of the public hearing is reserved for public officials. If they have not completed their testimony by that time, afterwards we will alternate between a public official and a member of the general public. Just so you're aware, you have -- the general public has three minutes to testify and then we can ask questions after that. First is Representative Brian Lanoue.

REP. LANOUE (45TH): Good afternoon. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking member Cheeseman, I appreciate the opportunity. I’m here today with a constituent, Jason Jack Russo. He is the owner of DEF Services Group. He employees over 85 employees in the trades with electrical, mechanical, and plumbing contracting and he wants to -- he’s going to speaking to you about the S.B. 13 regarding hiring ratios for journeymen to apprenticeships and I will yield my time to him so he can explain to you what he’s looking for. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
JASON JACK RUSSO: How are you? My name is Jason Jack Russo. I’m a resident of Griswold. As Brian said, I own a company with over 85 employees that does electrical, mechanical, and plumbing contracting. We are here to talk about the S.B. 13 Sections 2 and 3. Although we do support the proposal and it’s a good start in the right direction, adding, you know, an apprentice to the trade as this bill talks about, but it’s far from enough. What we’re looking for is we really need some help in supporting changing the hiring ratio from a three to one, which is currently in place in the state, three journeymen for every one apprentice we hire, to a one-to-one ratio, which is current state working ratio.

So I’d like to review that a little bit. Let me reiterate that the working ratio in the state is one journeyman to one apprentice, yet small businesses like mine cannot hire at a one-to-one ratio, but instead a three to one ratio after our first three employees. This makes no sense. What other state and what other industry needlessly restricts and tells private businesses that it can’t hire employees and we can’t expand while preventing, you know -- and economic growth. This would simply require amending DCP’s statute, Section 20, 332B, in the ratio shown in Governor’s Bill S.B. 13, Section 3. If you take a look at that, the charts can be a little confusing, but if you look at the ratio after the first three employees, you’ll see that the hiring limits are, in fact, three to one.

In the trade industries, electronical, mechanical, and all other licensed trades, workforce development is the number one concern for us right now. Electrical and plumbers need to help strengthen our
workforce in Connecticut due to vary factors, including aging out of our workforces, emphasis on energy initiatives, and overall customer demand. We need the hiring measure to be changed to a one-to-one so we can hire employees to meet these demands. Are you aware that it actually takes four years for an apprenticeship to go through schooling and on-the-job training to get a journeyman’s license, yet every year baby boomers are retiring and we’re losing one license and one possible trainer and all that trade knowledge is gone. They’re actually retiring faster than we can replenish our workforce. This is a major problem for Connecticut.

At our company, we currently have over 45 licensed journeypersons. Even using the available state provided relief programs, that limits us to a mere 19 apprentices in the field. That’s a 2.41 ratio. If the hiring ratio was changed to a one-to-one ratio to match the working ratio, then excluding the three license holders that work and operate in our field -- excuse me, in our office, our field staff alone could support 22 more employees, plus two to three more office support staff. Changing our ratio to one-to-one tomorrow, we could hire 24 to 25 more jobs and more people and trust me, there’s plenty of work out there to do that. We would do that without even thinking about it. Connecticut needs to fix the hiring ratio to one-to-one so that we can help our communities thrive, so I’m here to ask if we can help get that addressed. Thank you.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Thank you. Questions from Committee members? Representative Rutigliano? Senator?
SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): You mentioned the issue of retiring workers. How much of your workforce would you expect to retire in the next five years?

JASON JACK RUSSO: In the next five years at our current company, we’ll probably lose approximately six employees.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): And across the industry, about, you know, what are -- So six out of 85, that’s less than 10 percent. Industry wide, what would you expect?

JASON JACK RUSSO: I’m not sure of the exact numbers. I know there’s over 13,300 licensed employees in the electrical trade in the state. A large percentage of those, over 50 percent, are in the baby boomer years and I think the bigger concern with that is, it takes four years to make an apprentice, so if one guy retires this and one next year and one the year after that and one the year after that, we lose four before we can even get one. That’s the biggest problem. So if we don’t do something now --

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): Okay. Thank you.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): It’s a fair point, Representative, so I’ll just say that as a gloss, not really as a question, which is obviously the Committee’s well steeped in this issue. It’s something that we’ve looked at a couple years ago. There was a task force created and that task force, I believe I distributed it actually to Committee members the results of that task force. Not surprisingly, I think it was two-two on the trade side and two members on the -- for the employer’s side here and naturally they split on their
recommendations and didn’t give us much guidance and we appreciate the governor’s staff taking a look at it this year. It’s the first time I think we’ve had actually the administration with proposals to address that. I know the different constituent groups are here today.

I know they’ve been speaking with the administration which really has taken the lead in terms of being an architect of this bill. The Committee is interested in what everybody’s submitted. I know we’ve got people signed up, I know there are folks who are not signed up to show their support and we appreciate them being here on the trade side as well and on the other side of the issue. We’ve taken in all of that testimony.

I think more to your point, Representative Rutigliano, we also want to hear everybody, but the Committee itself is familiar with these issues and in particular the reports that were generated by that task force that was created, so we want to hear everybody today, but again there’s not a need to reinvent the wheel too, too much with us, but I’m sure Committee members will have questions as we go along, certainly for the administration, I know, that’s becoming the new element here is the administration taking a lead and I think the next speaker is actually Johnny Dach from the Governor’s Office to address S.B. 13, so if there’s no questions for you, Representative, and your constituent, I want to thank you for bring him up today and getting us started off with this issue and we look forward to working with you and the House on it as well.
REP. LANOUE (45TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, it’s a very important issue and we’re encouraging our young people to get into the trades and to get into this workforce and we have a very great employer here, so I’m glad he came up to share his perspective and I think it’s an important and we need to -- hopefully we can work with him in the future. Thank you.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Thank you both. I appreciate it. Mr. Dach.

JOHNNY DACH: Chairs and members of the General Law Committee, members of the public, I’m Johnny Dach, Governor Lamont’s policy director. I want to thank you for your hard work on behalf of Connecticut and for the opportunity to testify today in support of Senate Bill 13 --

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Can I ask you to move a little closer to that. There you go.

JOHNNY DACH: AN ACT EXPANDING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY IN LICENSED PROFESSIONS. As Governor Lamont has shared with you in his state of the state addresses, his primary objective is to get Connecticut’s economy growing again and to ensure that it’s an economy that works for everyone. Twenty-five percent of the jobs in that economy are in licensed occupations, a five-fold increase since the 1950s and the highest in the broader New England and Mid-Atlantic community. People who wish to work in those occupations must first obtain the permission of our state government. In general, that system of occupational licenses preserves public health and safety, as well as consumer confidence and employee welfare. At times, however, outmoded requirements frustrate current workers,
prevent low-income and other disadvantaged workers from entering promising fields, and discourage skilled workers from moving to Connecticut.

S.B. 13 modernizes aspects of those requirements to benefit current licensees, aspiring licensees, aspiring Connecticut residents, and the state as a whole. In particular, it will expand job opportunities for Connecticut’s young people. If we want to keep the next generation here in our state, then we need to provide what that generation needs and expects; on-line access to state forms and affordable, high-quality educational opportunities, entry-level opportunities in growing careers, meaningful tuition assistance, a forgiving approach to early mistakes; and growing, vibrant communities in which they themselves want to live.

Occupational licensing is a weighty issue that affects livelihoods, health, and safety. It is also an issue where you have demonstrated that bipartisan progress is possible. Governor Lamont appreciates this committee’s tradition of thoughtful, bipartisan approaches to weighty issues, like last year’s revisions to the Liquor Control Act, as well as the time you and your staff have invested in this issue over the years and your willingness to consider his proposals this session. I want to begin by quickly discussing Section 8 of the bill, as it has attracted the most attention in the testimony already posted to the CGA website. Research by the Obama Whitehouse and Federal Reserve found that licensed workers are 36 percent less likely to move across state lines. Section 8 makes it easier for families to choose Connecticut as the place they want to live, work, and raise children by making
licenses more affordable between states and the application more consistent across agencies.

More people in Connecticut means more jobs for current residents and more vibrant communities for everyone. S.B. 13 sets a new tone by saying our state is ready to welcome new residents. Under these provisions, if you move to our state, including as a military spouse, and if you have been licensed in good standing in another state for at least two years, the licensing agency may provide you a chance to skip the Connecticut exam and obtain a Connecticut license if you can pass our test. In many instances, those two or more years of on-the-job experience will make up for any disparities in training requirements between jurisdictions. Similar language has passed with bipartisan majorities in other states.

This section includes three safeguards that ensure public health and safety is preserved. The first is the testing requirements, as those tests cover Connecticut’s specific material and are written in partnership with experts on the licensing boards. The second is that subject matter experts at each agency will determine the practice level at which any license is issued, allowing them to an issue an appropriately limited Connecticut license to a new resident who may have held an unlimited one in another state. And third, the agency is able to deny any application in the best interest of the state. This section sets forth a new and consistently welcoming attitude, but not a right to a license. Briefly, Section 1 sets a timeline for state agencies to provide workers in every sizable licensed occupation the option to renew that license.
Licensees who prefer to renew by mail would still be able to do so.

Sections 2 and 3 take a fresh approach to the always contentious apprentice hiring ratio by allowing sponsors to hire an additional apprentice in the last year of his or her training or a registered pre-apprentice, creating job opportunities for young workers and an incentive for employers to see apprentices through their program. Section 4 provides content experts at the agencies, licensing boards, and national associations the discretion to approve on-line courses that meet all of their other education quality requirements. Those courses are often more affordable than in-person classes and can be completed on a worker’s own schedule. Section 5 requires the Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority, a state quasi-public that provides financing programs to university students, to study whether it could also provide that assistance to students at occupational schools.

And finally, Section 6 and 7 expand opportunities for people with criminal records by directing agencies to respond to a forthcoming legislative report on that topic and by clarifying that only felony convictions can bar applicants from certain DCP licenses. Thank you very much for the opportunity to be here today and to discuss these matters with you.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Questions from Committee members? Tim?

REP. ACKERT (8TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for being here and your report and your work on this legislation. One worry is that during your process of discussing the, and I know there
will be many questions, as the Good Chairman mentioned, regarding the ratios, was there any discussion with the businesses out there and the providers for the apprenticeships as to how they're filling the positions? Are they, you know, are people struggling to find work in terms of the apprenticeship level and were there -- I know the working group and I know when you have a two-two that means it’s a two -- there was nothing really accomplished, to be honest with you, it’s a two-two tie and now I want to let you know, when you have that, because we’re both still in the same, as you mentioned, contentious area. Was there any research done on like reaching out to the businesses and the providers for the -- on both sides, you know, union and open shop?

JOHNNY DACH:  So to speak just briefly in just defense of the working group, which although it deadlocked on this issue with that two-two report, I think had the chief consensus on other issues and driven some --

REP. ACKERT (8TH):  And I apologize for that one section of that one is what I mentioned only. I didn’t mean the good work that -- there were some good bodies that did a lot of work and I truly appreciate that.

JOHNNY DACH:  We’ve met in the course of putting this together and workshopping the ideas that we’ve put forth, both with members of the affected building trades, both on the union and open shop side of that conversation and heard about both the difficulties that shops are having hiring an appropriate number of apprentices or finding enough skills journeymen who have graduated from these
programs and also from the other side, the difficulty that journeymen are having finding jobs once they graduate from those programs, which is the balance that drives a lot of this conversation, so I think you’ll hear a significant amount of testimony on both of those issues.

JOHNNY DACH: Thank you and Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Thank you. Other questions from Committee members? Thank you very much. Thank you, John.

JOHNNY DACH: Thank you.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Could you just circulate to the Committee while we’re here, recirculate the two publications from that taskforce? Thank you. Our commissioner of economic development, Mr. Lehman, is he around? Okay, we’ll let him come in when he frees up. Mr. Ross from the Office of Military Affairs.

BOB ROSS: Good afternoon. I’m Bob Ross. I’m the executive director of the Connecticut Office for Military Affairs. I’m charged by statute to serve as the advocate for service members and their families to other state agencies and so it’s in that role that I’m here today and I want to focus exclusively on Section 8 of the Proposed Bill because that is all about addressing the national problem that we’re part of. In February of 2018, the secretaries of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force all signed a letter together to the Council of Governors and they were identifying two very important problems that the military is facing. One was quality of public schools and I’m not worried about that, we’ve got great schools in Connecticut.
The other problem is military spouse unemployment and licensure reciprocity. We are a part of that problem and I’m really excited to see that we’re now going to address that problem.

In that letter from the service secretaries, they asked that this issue become part of the BRAC Criteria, so when they get ready to close a base, part of what they’re going to look at is how well we have done as a state to address the unemployment of military spouses and the transfer of licenses between states and they’re going to look at the quality of public schools. Across this country, we have service members who are making the very painful choice to leave their families in another state so they can retain that job for their spouse because that second income is so vitally important to these military families. The last thing I do want to say about this bill before I’m happy to take questions is I like the approach of this bill. We’ve taken military spouses -- By the way, more than 90 percent of them are female because of the way the military is so dominated by male service members -- but what we’ve done is we have not pulled them out of the general population for special treatment. We’re trying to do the right thing for everybody in Connecticut, including military spouses. I think that’s the best approach to take here and I’m happy to take any questions you may have for me.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Representative Cheeseman.

REP. CHEESEMAN (37TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for coming today, Bob, and I know we’ve had lots of discussions about this. We served together on the military child’s education piece and if I’m not incorrect, you told me that Connecticut
ranked last in the country in terms of offering that reciprocity to military spouses? Have I misremembered?

BOB ROSS: No, you're correct. If you go to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce website, you will see a graph of the United States that ranks all states in basically what they have done to deal with this licensure issue and Connecticut ranked number 50 and we had nobody else in that category, so we were the worst in the nation here and so it’s good news that we’re taking this up. I’ve talked to several senior officers around the state the last few days. They are very happy to know that we are taking this up.

REP. CHEESEMAN (37TH): And you said you like this approach because it doesn’t give special privileges. It simply recognizes the skills, makes them go through the similar exams and licensure to ensure that they’re delivering the quality of service at that level of their occupations that we expect of everybody else in the state?

BOB ROSS: Yes. There was a similar bill that came up earlier this week in the Veterans Affairs Committee. That took a different approach. That is where we unilaterally took military spouses and made them into a special category and just gave them special treatment. I don’t like that approach to things because eventually it just creates resentment in the larger population when you give somebody a free pass to the front of the line. What this bill does, what I like, is it treats military spouses the way we should be treating everybody and gives everybody maybe quicker, easier access to a job earlier and with less difficulty than it is now. Another point that’s not in my testimony that I want
to make you aware of is that all the services have established programs now so that when a military spouse moves into a new state and has to get a license, a professional license, the fees will be reimbursed by the Department of Defense, so they are seeing this process is just something related to a military transfer.

REP. CHEESEMAN (37TH): So assuming this legislation passes and is signed into the law by the governor, which would happen obviously because it’s his bill, what is the process to let the branches of the service, those military families know, that now Connecticut, our door is open to you if you want to come here with your spouse?

BOB ROSS: Well, I will tell you, it will not be hard to get their attention. They’re watching us. They are going to know whether this bill passes or not and I serve on the board of a national organization of defense communities. This is talked about at all their national conferences. It will not be a problem getting the word out to the all the service secretaries that we’ve taken this action.

REP. CHEESEMAN (37TH): Okay, thank you, and I thought your comment that this will now be -- the reciprocity piece will now be considered part of the BRAC process I think makes this even more urgent because you and I know, living in southeastern Connecticut, how devastating that possible BRAC was back in the early 2000s and how a future BRAC would be, so I think anything we can do to create a more welcoming state for those military spouses is good and ensure the quality of service they’re going to provide. Thank you for coming here today. Thank you for your time, Mr. Chairman.
REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Thank you, Representative, for those questions. Other questions from Committee members? A couple just from me real quick, more administrative, does this cover Coast Guard or no?

BOB ROSS: Yes, it would cover the Coast Guard. I’m glad you brought that up. That’s something I spend a lot of time on is because the Coast Guard is not part of the Department of Defense, they’re part of Homeland Security, people often forget about that other branch of the service and so what we do here will apply to the Coast Guard, but it will just come down through the Department of Homeland Security instead of the Department of Defense.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): And if we do this, what is your sense -- you obviously have your finger on the pulse of how this is done nationally and these national rankings, what is your sense of what this would do to our last in the nation ranking if we were able to advance this?

BOB ROSS: Well, it would take us immediately right out of being last in the nation and the nice thing is, the governor’s staff did a good job at looking at other bills around the country that have been successful and they’ve modeled this after those bills, so I think we would probably move from last to somewhere in the middle of the pack, maybe higher.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): And just while we’ve got you here and we’re on that topic, what is your sense of other things that we could do, low hanging fruit, for this committee. You don’t have to answer this now if you’re not prepared to, but I think this committee would be interested in hearing from you if there’s other things we can do. Obviously you’re
more in front of the Veterans Committee I would think, but if there’s other things that this committee could do, we’d love to hear it.

BOB ROSS: Okay. I will take a look at that. I’ll look at some other issues. This is the issue of the day. When I made reference to that memorandum from the service secretaries about how this could be a factor in future basing decisions, that was not meant to scare anybody. What it was meant to do was to elevate this issue to make sure you know this is the national level issue that’s got national attention from the leaders of the Pentagon.

REP. D’AGOSTINO (91ST): That’s great. Well, it was great to have you. We appreciate you coming to this committee. We would like to see you more. If we can help, let us know, please. I don’t think there’s any other questions, so thank you.

BOB ROSS: I will.

REP. D’AGOSTINO (91ST): Thank you. I know I think we’re still waiting for Commissioner Lehman, but I did see that our assistant commissioner, associate commissioner, Marriott, from DCP is here. I’m just going to let him jump the line real quick because we do have medical Cannabis on our agenda and I want to make sure we’ve got DCP’s views on that, so Commissioner?

RODRIK MARRIOTT: Hi and thank you for the opportunity. I am actually the director of drug control. My name is Rodrick Marriott and I’m here on behalf of Commissioner Seagull. Thank you for the opportunity, again, to speak on these -- the marijuana bills. And so there’s really two big parts of the bill. I think some of it will affect
the department and we are supportive of the addition of the conditions. It is approved by the Board of Physicians. We are grateful to have such a thoughtful board review these conditions and put all the effort that they put into it, so we’re very happy for that purpose. We’re also supportive of the ability of patients to transfer between different dispensaries. We have more dispensaries now than ever. We’re up to 18 licenses facilities, 17 of them are active, and to have patient choice is a good thing. We probably just need to work on the language a little bit to make sure it protects patients appropriately and make sure that people aren’t getting more medicine than they should be.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): And would we do that through the PMP?

RODRICK MARRIOTT: Yes.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Okay.

RODRICK MARRIOTT: Yeah, and so the idea of having the PMP be real time at these dispensaries where the dispensations are uploaded, you know, in real time will prevent some of that ability for diversion from dispensary to dispensary.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): But we don’t want to, obviously, overburden your staff. We know you guys work hard and with the expanding dispensaries and conditions, you’ll have more to do. We appreciate that. The original intent behind the medical Cannabis bills, there was -- might have supposed to go to DCP directly for that staffing. We’d still like to see that happen. Obviously we run into some budgetary issues when that happens, but I think there’s some general support in the Committee to
make sure that you're staffed appropriately to handle, regardless of what happens with recreational, a very robust, you know, first in the nation model for the nation medical program and we appreciate what you do to administer that. Questions for the director? Representative Candelora.

REP. CANDELORA (86TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for your testimony. Just picking up on that section in particular, I think right now as it’s written, it’s going to be limited to the dispensaries with common ownership where somebody could -- if there’s the electronic uploading that they would be able to have that patient choice. Has DCP contemplated sort of moving all the dispensaries into an electronic system so that we could have patient choice across the board regardless of which dispensary is utilized? I understand why the regs were written originally when we wrote them. One of the concerns I have is just this vertical -- the way it’s integrated and sort of the monopoly that each dispensary ends up having over the patient that it’s causing potentially the artificial level of pricing. Has there been contemplation about or looking at trying to get the pricing reasonable for the consumers?

RODRICK MARRIOTT: So yeah. So I think that some of our commentary on the language that we’d like to work on with everybody is to actually allow for transfer between all despite common ownership interest and I think that the idea would be to actually make sure that every dispensary prove that they have the ability to upload in real time and thereby kind of allowing more free choice in the market, and we think that that will really be better
for our patients. It will go back to more of a pharmacy, true pharmacy, model that it was kind of intended to be despite some of the other security measures we have around it, but the technology exists now, probably better than it did even when we started this program, and so we think a thoughtful approach to that to make sure that the patients’ rights are maintained while providing them this access and so that it’s fair for everyone to get access is the best way to go, so we’re happy to work on the language with everybody here so that we can make sure that we have the best program, it stays the best program, and, you know, people are getting what they need inside the program.

And I would like to thank you guys for the recognition of the hard work of my department. It’s not just me. There’s a bunch of people behind me that do this work and they’re very concerned about the patients and that’s why they work so hard and the recognition of the funding is also appreciated. We have been able to get more physicians lately and we’re processing very rapidly. We’ve seen a roughly 2,500 patient increase just this year.

REP. CANDELORA (86TH): Twenty-five hundred?

RODRICK MARRIOTT: Yeah, 2,500 patients.

REP. CANDELORA (86TH): Yeah, I think one of the importance of the program isn’t just the medical program in terms of the patient delivery, but the other piece I think that’s so valuable is the research component that the FDA -- I think we’re the first in the country to be approved to have that research component, but I think it’s important for us to continue to make sure that this whole program thrives, but focusing on the patient piece, one of
the things I do hear is just the permitting process for the people to get their prescription cards. Are we looking at streamlining that process as well?

RODRICK MARRIOTT: So that process has been streamlined dramatically.

REP. CANDELORA (86TH): Okay.

RODRICK MARRIOTT: Again, through the use of technology and efforts of our staff and with help from our partners at BEST, we’ve been able to do a number of things to streamline our process. We are processing right now somewhere in around a week on new applications. That is -- We’ve probably not seen that since the inception of the program. We are also -- And that will fluctuate in time from time to time depending on, you know, staffing and vacations and such, but we’ve been working very, very diligently to make sure that our software is doing the most work that it can to allow us to get these patients access to their medication as quickly as possible and not being a roadblock to that and that seven days thing is something I’m very proud of and sometimes it’s even under that. We’ve streamlined renewals dramatically as well in the last 18 months or so where if you are being recertified, although that’s not a recognized term in the law, but if you are recertified in our program and had no changes to anything in your profile, you're automatically reapproved.

REP. CANDELORA (86TH): Thank you. I appreciate that and the final piece, are we also analyzing just the pricing levels? Do we keep a look at that model?
RODRICK MARRIOTT: So we don’t specifically have the resources and -- to watch pricing that specifically. That being said, we have now 17 active facilities that can help kind of create more of a market-driven price model and I think actually transfer may play a role in that as well, so that is why -- those are some of the reasons why we’re supportive of that particular change while maintaining the integrity of the program.

REP. CANDELORA (86TH): All right. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Thank you, Representative. I’d also note just by the representative’s questions that you’ve got another bill before us that sort of sharpens the attorney general’s focus to look into exactly the vertical integration and the trust issues that Representative Candelora’s raised, so clearly this is on your mind and then with respect to the to the permits the representative just mentioned, the other piece of this bill, of course, is we’d like to reduce the fees or at least make them one-time fees and I don’t want to speak for you, but I think the department is generally supportive of that. You know, our argument from a fiscal point of view is that, as you just mentioned, with 2,500 new patients and then if we codify the pain as the physicians board approved, we’ll see an even larger increase in medical patients and that should help offset the reduction in the renewal costs that we burden these folks with that, you know, obviously it’s not covered by insurance, it’s out of their pocket, and they’re trying to decide what something is medically necessary and, you know, food on the table. So I don’t know if you had a view on that or if you want to stay neutral?
RODRICK MARRIOTT: We’ll generally stay neutral on that. The reality is that there’s a lot of conversation in this building about healthcare costs now, it’s on everyone’s mind, so all the thoughtful conversations need to occur and while we can’t predict with any kind of certainty what these new conditions will do, the board of physicians meets pretty much twice a year depending on how many proposals we have and they will continue to do so the program stands poised to grow and we’ll continue to watch that market as it does it.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): And just real quick, I know the Senator and I were just discussing supply. She said something that we hear every now and then, sometimes we hear from dispensaries that there’s a supply issue from the supplier. The supplier just say there’s no supply issue. As I understand it, it often has to do with whether or not it’s a particular strain in these -- it’s very granular on the strain, just while we’ve got you, any issues from the department’s perspective in terms of supply?

RODRICK MARRIOTT: So as I reviewed that in the previous year, there was only one complaint that was formerly put to our office about supply issues and usually the supply issues are around specific products. There may be more niche type products or, you know, products that a certain person is revisiting that maybe isn’t there. The challenge to this market is we’re talking about a plant and how it grows and predicting a market with changing conditions and changing patient demographics and so since I started as director in 2016, we have seen a growth in this program from 8,000 patients to 40,000 patients and so predicting that market is incredibly
challenging and meeting the needs of all 40,000 can be particularly challenging on a commodity that, you know, was plant-based and has a shelf life based on that.

I think that the industry seems to be doing a really good job at attempting to do that on both ends right now. Pharmacists are in the dispensaries to help navigate patients through slight changes in products, but getting a plant to grow the exact same chemical footprint every single time is challenging. You know, seasonal effects play a role even in indoor climates that we’ve seen and so we continue to have dialogs with both sides of that on those issues to make sure we are paying attention to it and our producers adequately meet the supply of our patients. Now is it perfect every time? Probably not, but I don’t think it’s much different than, you know, shortages that we have in the pharmaceutical world as well.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Great, thank you, that’s very helpful. Other questions? Well, I think the Committee is generally -- my sense is that we’re generally supportive of what you're saying in terms of through the PMP and we can open this up across all dispensaries rather than just those owned under a single umbrella, so we’d love to get that language. I think, you’re, you know, the DCP has been working on that. If we can get that language this week, we can get it into JFS to get out of committee, if for some reason we can’t do that, I think we’re committed to making sure we open it up and that’s bipartisan as well, so thank you very much. Great, Director, I appreciate you coming and spending some time with us. We’ll move to the public portion. I know when the DEC commissioner
gets here, we’ll let him testify as well. In the meantime, Nicole Leja, the Connecticut Medical Cannabis Society.

NICOLE LEJA: Representative D’Agostino and members of the Committee, the Connecticut Medical Cannabis Council, CMCC, would like to offer brief comments on House Bill 5295, AN ACT CONCERNING REVISIONS TO MEDICAL MARIJUANA STATUTES. CMCC is comprised of the four licensed medical marijuana producers in the state. We produce the medical marijuana that patients purchase from dispensaries, formulating a wide variety of different products. They are verified and validated by independent third party testing and our pharmaceutical grade medicines have helped Connecticut patients treat a variety of serious and debilitating ailments. At the outset, we would like to acknowledge this committee and the General Assembly’s fine work on the medical marijuana program in recent years. We also want to thank Governor Lamont and the Department of Consumer Protection for the professional manner in which they have implemented the program.

When we testified on this issue one year ago, there were 33,000 patients enrolled in the medical marijuana program. This month, there are 40,000 patients, an increase of 21 percent. The program is growing and more patients are being helped with their medical condition. We continue to be fully focused on doing what we can to retain Connecticut’s reputation as having the very best medical marijuana program in the nation. To that end, House Bill 5295 contains enhancements to the program we believe make sense. The bill eliminates application administrative fees that patients currently pay. We believe this is a good step to take in view of the
fact that many individuals have medical conditions that are serious or life-threatening. Patients need to be seen by a physician or APRN before they can qualify for the program. A typical office visit can be $100 dollars or more. There is also the registration fee of $100 dollars, $100-dollar annual renewal fee, and a $25 dollar fee for a primary caregiver if deemed necessary by the physician.

As you see, these fees quickly add up. House Bill 5295 codifies in statute the action taken last fall by the board of physicians to add chronic pain as a qualifying condition. We note the addition is word for word as proposed by the board. It would involve chronic pain with an underlying medical diagnosis of at least six months’ duration that has not responded to other treatments. We support this. Finally, the bill will allow patients to have a bit more flexibility in which dispensary they use. They could obtain medical marijuana from dispensaries other than the one they are registered at so long as ownership is the same. We believe the Committee should look at opening this up further and let patients purchase their medicine from the dispensary of their choice and have these facilities implement real time integration with the EDNPA, the electronic prescription drug monitoring program. This will allow the DCP and other dispensaries to monitor patient allotment as purchases are made.

Thank you for considering the views of the Connecticut Medical Cannabis Council on House Bill 5295.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Thank you. Give me the fees one more time?
NICOLE LEJA: So typically they have to qualify and that can be at least $100 dollars and up to $250 dollars are the fees I’ve seen. The registration fee is $100 dollars and annual renewal fee of $100 dollars and as you need a primary caregiver, that’s an additional $25 dollars.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Thank you. Questions from Committee members? Senator, please.

SEN. KISSEL (7TH): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. That’s one of the architects of the medical marijuana laws. It just makes me feel really good every year I hear we’re like the gold standard, you know, best in the country, so we did something really good. I’m just wondering two points. First of all, why are we seeing such a dramatic uptick right now? It seems like it was sort of level for a few years and now -- but the last couple of years it’s really rocketed up. Is that because we have more ailments where someone can obtain medical marijuana or is just folks have more awareness out in the public or they’re better able to afford marijuana, what would you ascribe it to?

NICOLE LEJA: Well, definitely my opinion, but I think it’s a variety of factors, two of which you mentioned. One is there’s a stigma being dissolved about medical marijuana and its effectiveness and then the conditions that have been added have opened that up to people that wouldn’t have gotten a card otherwise. And then also, the DCP has been able to implement a faster turnaround of applicants, so that’s all helpful to the program.

SEN. KISSEL (7TH): And while I was very supportive and again worked real hard on the medical marijuana construct that we have that seems to be working so
well, I have real concerns regarding recreational marijuana and being involved in the medical side, I’m just wondering -- and I don’t know if you testified on Monday on this or not, but there was some testimony in the Judiciary Committee where we were having discussions about the legalization of recreational marijuana and there were some folks that testified and said we have medical dispensaries and we would like you to limit the way that people can get recreational marijuana to the medical dispensaries and I have some concerns in mixing those two entities and I’m just wondering if you had an opinion regarding that one way or the other?

NICOLE LEJA: I think it has to depend on the host community or town that is -- currently has a medical dispensary and that -- not all of them would like to have adult-use dispensaries as well, so I think it should default back to that to start with. And then the compliance and the regulations that monitor the medical program have to be the minimum standard for what’s adult-use sales.

SEN. KISSEL (7TH): Great, thank you very much.
Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Thank you, Senator. It’s great to have the institutional knowledge that you bring on something like this. And really, it’s a model for the nation and I love that this committee, regardless of what happens with RAC, I think we’re committed to making sure that we’ve got the most robust and again, kind of the gold standard medical program in the country. Other questions? Thank you very much.

NICOLE LEJA: Thank you.
REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Sak Seedasome, Chillproof.

SAK SEEDASOME: Good afternoon. Thank you Co-Chairs Senator Maroney, Representative D’Agostino, Vice-Chairs, Ranking Members, and members of the General Law Committee for the opportunity to provide testimony today on Senate Bill 254, AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE SYSTEMS. My name is Sak Seedasome. I’m here today with my friends and colleagues, Matt Ventura, a Husky alumni with myself, and Connor Rasmussen. We created Chillproof, LLC, because we want to become Connecticut’s first fast-casual, self-pour technology establishment providing consumers with a top-notch experience. However, we currently are unable to open our establishment until the Nutmeg State joins the 45 other states that are currently using self-pour technology in bars, restaurants, and breweries. Until then, local consumers are losing out on this technology.

That is why we are here today testifying in support of this pro-jobs local investment, pro-economic competitiveness, pro-public safety legislation. We’re certain that Connecticut can benefit by allowing self-pour technology in restaurants, bars, and breweries. Here’s the bottom line; allowing self-pour technology in state will bolster our state’s economic competitiveness, empower and protect our consumers, and promote significant private investment in our communities and their futures. We’re hopeful that you, the distinguished members of the General Law Committee will agree with us and in turn allow self-pour technology to become legal in the Nutmeg State. We’re more than happy to answer any questions that you may have and thank you for your time.
REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): So just describe for us the consumer experience that you're envisioning if you can open up your place.

SAK SEEDASOME: Sure. So how this all works is a consumer will enter the establishment and right away one of our TIPS certified employees will see you there -- ensure that they’re 21 years old and also get provided a form of payment, debit card, credit card, and in return, will be giving that consumer an RFID chip card or bracelet that allows them to go up to what we call the tap wall, which would have a variety of different beers, wines that are available and they’re able to, using their RFID chip, access one of those taps and pour from one ounce up to, what’s in the legislation, 32 ounces of beer or 10 ounces of wine and pay for what they’ve poured. At the end, it will be returning that chip to us and completing their transaction with us.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Interesting. Questions from Committee members? Representative.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for being here. I love the idea because -- Well, in a way I’ll say that because I was thinking, you know, if I’m wanting to open up a shop that didn’t need many employees -- actually, when you said pro-jobs, I was interested in oh, how’s this going to be -- because I have this little place that could be a Tim’s Tavern or something and I just self-pour and I stand there myself as the owner of it and sell those, so when you said pro-jobs, that kind of like, you know, I guess I’m not going to make out so well if I have to hire people. No, but anyways, so the idea is, you know -- and the regulation and things like that, so how do you focus
on the removal of tip service people because you don’t really need them, I don’t believe, as you when you say pro-jobs. Explain the offset loss to like the tip service waiters, waitresses, things like that.

SAK SEEDASOME: So for us, there is no loss in jobs. We still need those individuals to maintain those -- that -- those consumers are staying within those legal limits, right, we’re creating jobs with every establishment we do open.

MATTHEW VENTURA: Just to add, I would say our -- what we want to add is also the experience, right. We want to have these people in our establishment that we employ to interact with the consumers, right. In Connecticut, we have 90 plus breweries with hundreds, close to thousands, different types of beers, right, so you could just imagine someone come in and look at a wall with a whole bunch of these beers, not sure what they want, right, so our people are there to give them an experience and give them kind of guidance, right. I mean, I think we want to promote the local breweries. The town that we have in Connecticut is what spurred us a lot to even think of this, right. So we want to have as many people as we can, one monitoring the bar, right, monitoring these walls, but to also make sure that we’re giving them the experience they need. If they're looking for something specific or if they want a recommendation, right, they not only know how the system works, how to show them how to pour from the system, but also to give them knowledge of what’s out there, right, maybe something they’ve never tried before that I think promotes not just for us, right, the ability to having someone get someone they enjoy, but also for them to become a
fan of a brewery that they might have never heard of in Connecticut, which, you know, I think is a win-win across the board, right.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): Sounds like the business I was thinking up, so thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for the time.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): Hey, Matt, will you please identify yourself for the record.

MATT VENTURA: Sorry. I’m Matthew Ventura. I’m from Orange, Connecticut, just coming as part of the group coming with Sak. Thank you.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Senator Leone.

SEN. LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon, guys. Good to see you. Just a couple clarification questions, so if this legislation passes, this is not just to open up a new bar with just this type of pouring, this would go to even existing locations as well, like a bar could ask for this product to be put in their existing platform, as well as a separate one?

SAK SEEDASOME: From what we know, that is how the legislation is written up. I can’t speak directly to that directly, but yes, you can -- after a significant investment in the technology because the technology is something that monitors how much is poured, as well as the consumer itself, yes, they can install these.

SEN. LEONE (27TH): And I kind of asked that question because even though you could open an establishment where this just kind of pouring facility is provided, an existing normal bar could also incorporate it if they chose to. Correct?
SAK SEEDASOME: Correct.

SEN. LEONE (27TH): Thank you. And in terms of your RFID chip you mentioned that they would get to go up to the wall for beer, wine, or whatever, would that chip be for a specific beer or would it be amongst a range or could the person, as long as they got the chip for one drip, they can choose from whatever tap they want to pour? How would that work?

SAK SEEDASOME: Correct. That chip allows them to access any one of our taps as long as they still have the below the legal limit available to them on their cards, right, so yes, they’ll be able to go and try that and those chips are designated to that single establishment and only and at the end of the night, those chips actually turn off so you cannot use them the next day.

SEN. LEONE (27TH): So it’s use them or lose them kind of thing?

SAK SEEDASOME: Well, you don’t pay for it unless you -- but yes, you're right.

SEN. LEONE (27TH): And is there a limit when you buy and sell the chip within -- like would I be able to buy six drinks at once or would I -- would you monitor how many per chip?

SAK SEEDASOME: Yeah, so there’s only one chip, one card, one RFID chip per customer. That one is linked to you only based on the driver’s license, the identification that you've provided us, so you are not going ahead and buying a card for a specific credit amount, but you are using it to access the system and at the end, pay for what you have poured.
MATT VENTURA: I think maybe to clarify, I think, to hear the question maybe differently, so you would be given the card to pour up to a serving, right, so within the law itself, a serving could be 16 ounces, but the legal limit of what you could pour before the card itself cuts you off and you would have to go back to one of our employees, you know, a TIPS certified employee, that will, you know, evaluate you and see if, you know, you could be renewed for, in this case, 32 ounces of beer or 10 ounces of wine. It will automatically cut that person off at that limit.

SEN. LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Matt, because that’s kind of where I was going. I want to make sure that someone doesn’t get the chip and starts drinking excessively because there’s no ability to turn it off or is there someone that would be monitoring the person if there’s -- you know, like now a bartender can sort of see that you've had too much to drink and say I think I'm cutting you off. At what point would your TIPS certified professionals perform that?

MATT VENTURA: So I think the nice kind of environment where our employees are walking around and monitoring, this is a -- it is also gives you the ability to cut someone off not just at the limit of 10 ounces or 32 ounces of beer, you can cut them off whenever, right. If you determine at some point they're inebriated, you could actually go into our system and cut the access for their card off, right, and it will let you know, the system let that consumer know, you know, they are not allowed to use the wall in which case they will probably come to your employee and we can explain to them, right, it’s time to check out.
SEN. LEONE (27TH): Thank you. That’s kind of -- I wanted to make sure there’s some proper controls on the tail end. I mean, having a good consumer experience is great, but if we don’t have the ability to make sure that you as the host establishment doesn’t have some kind of control, then it could quickly turn into an issue where we would have to come back and make more changes. That’s not what we want to do, but what I’ve heard from the product and where, you know, it potentially could go and how many towns are interested, I think it’s a good thing and have you had any input on how many towns are looking to do this and where you could potentially be?

SAK SEEDASOME: So we have had direct contact over a dozen potential owners. They have asked us how the lobby has been going, how this has been going specifically, so there’s about 12 other individuals like us trying to open establishments and use this technology.

SEN. LEONE (27TH): And your TIPS certified folks wouldn’t be replacing normal TIPS service providers and bartenders and so forth, right? This is an additional employment opportunity?

SAK SEEDASOME: Correct.

SEN. LEONE (27TH): Great. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Representative Gibson.

REP. GIBSON (15TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to further ask questions essentially around what Mr. Leone was talking about as far as the amount of alcohol you can purchase, so with the card, I know you said it’s a certain amount of
ounces, right, but how many of those individual ounces can you purchase, like one drink, two drinks?

SAK SEEDASOME: So you're the one in control of pouring it from the tap, so as you dispense it, those ounces will decrease, so you are allowed with the language of 32 ounces of beer, 10 ounces of wine and that’s two beers, two 16-ounce beers.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): You can pour like a 2-ounce tasting of one beer or if you know the beer you want, you can fill up a glass of 16 ounces --

SAK SEEDASOME: Correct.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Or you can have yards or are you going to have --

SAK SEEDASOME: Our model has it at 16 ounces.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Yeah, so 16 ounces.

REP. GIBSON (15TH): And then after that card is used up, you go back to the wait staff and they can renew it and you monitor them. That’s what you just said, right, before --

SAK SEEDASOME: Correct. They will assess your sobriety under the TIPS certification, their training, to identify if someone has had too much and should be cut off. We would not be renewing their access.

REP. GIBSON (15TH): Is there any -- So say I buy a card and can I just give a card to my buddy and then they start using my card?

SAK SEEDASOME: And that’s why our individuals are -- TIPS certified staff is there, to monitor that, just as in the current establishments of buying something and handing it over.
REP. GIBSON (15TH): Right, so I’m like, help me out, I’m envisioning a busy place and you're making a lot of money, a lot of people in there, everyone’s having a great experience, but I take my card, right, and there’s a lot of people in here, and I give it to Senator Leone and say here, you can use my card, can that be stopped?

SAK SEEDASOME: If I -- If our staff sees that, we will remotely shut you off.

REP. GIBSON (15TH): How do you -- How is your staff going to see that?

SAK SEEDASOME: Because that’s why we’re hiring enough staff to monitor those situations.

REP. GIBSON (15TH): I’m struggling with that a little bit because you go so far, so many people, there’s music being played, conversations, I can just give him my card and he can just go and start pouring beers himself?

SAK SEEDASOME: Yeah, that’s a -- that is a particular question that for us, just like any other bar that’s currently available to serve alcohol and this one isn’t going to be pouring liquor of any sort, this is just beer, wine as written, we are diligently monitoring that. We do not want that type of practice to happen within our consumer base because the investment in this technology itself is something that we do not want to lose our license to that type of behavior.

REP. GIBSON (15TH): Okay. Another question, am I envisioning right, so you have a person that’s at the bar where you can pour your stuff, all right, so I am concerned, too, about the reduction in employees. To me, it seems like you would need less
employees. I know this question was asked earlier, but could you explain that a little better, please.

SAK SEEDASOME: In our staff, the way that we’ve developed it, it is all about the customer experience as well as the monitoring, so for us, we will not have less employees.

MATT VENTURA: And to follow up, I think along the lines of your question of how do you make sure things aren’t getting passed off like that, you know, if you have 60 tabs of wine and beer, I would add that if you had one or two people, you’re not going to police that, right, there’s really no way for you to know that. You could even say the same for a bar. If there’s one bartender and there’s 50 people, there’s no way to know who’s taking a beer and passing it along to someone else. In our -- The way that Sak has kind of said, the way we envision it, is our people are continuously walking around, right, they don’t have to be behind a bar. It’s a wall. I don’t know if maybe that’s part of it, right, it’s kind of a wall that people will be walking up to and interacting with, not kind of a bar where our people are just kind of standing there and can’t walk around. They’re walking around monitoring, as well as, you know, just interacting with people who are standing there looking at the wall thinking of things.

So as far as, you know, reducing staff with an investment of kind of what we’re looking at, right, these are not cheap systems. You know, you’re talking over $100,000 dollars for a system such as this. You are not trying to shortchange the staff there and give them an experience that’s going to not make them come back, right. Part of it is just
letting them know what this wall gives them the ability to do to create plates, to create different things, to pour as much or as little, so the more people we have that we employ that can explain that to the consumer, I think is better, right. We’re not going to short staff just because for our investment, that makes no sense.

REP. GIBSON (15TH): Thanks for the explanation. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Of course, in a normal bar, right, the check on the person coming up and buying two beers and passing it on to their friends is just the bartender, whereas in your establishment, there’s the condition of the human check, there’s the limit of the chip? So if I’m buying for myself and for somebody else, my --

SAK SEEDASOME: You run out.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Yeah, and then I’ve got to go to you to get it renewed and hmm, this person down 32 ounces of beer in three seconds, you know, what’s going on here. I would think that that would lead your TIPS staff to question what’s going on, right? I mean, in some ways, I kind of envision this almost like a dual check that actually doesn’t exist in the -- I mean, it would be a different story if we were talking about an unlimited chip, which obviously this committee is not going to do and it’s not in the legislation, but because you’ve got a limit on the chip and your TIPS staff, you've almost got a dual layer of protection.

SAK SEEDASOME: Yes, sir.

MATT VENTURA: I mean, even to be a consumer, right, if I had a chip and it had 32 ounces, I’m probably
not going to let Sak 15 ounces on his own and I’m all of a sudden left over with only 17, right. The goal of this is it’s not a bar, it’s not shots. It is an environment where you're trying to just enjoy the beverages that Connecticut has there, right, that’s kind of our envisionment of what it is.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): It would be interesting if you could hook up with the Craft Brew Guild. I would be interested to get maybe some -- and I realize these might be tough to calculate right now, but on the economic development piece, you know, if we’re talking about walls of Connecticut beer, an increase in interest of our craft brewers and obviously that means more production for them and more employees on their side, I’d be interested in sort of what they envision the positive economic development impact of this is. I think they would be a useful ally for you as you go forward here.

MATT VENTURA: I mean, I think the system is a showcase on what’s out there. If we could just bring in more, it’s better, right? If it brings in more for everyone, so be it.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Something that some members of the liquor industry tend to forget. Questions? Senator?

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): So thank you for coming up here to testimony today from the beautiful town of Orange, Connecticut. Representative had to throw that in there. You know, I believe there is an existing restaurant that has already installed this technology in the hopes that they’ll be able. Can you talk a little bit about that?
SAK SEEDASOME: So two years ago, Thousand Degrees Pizza in Glastonbury installed this system. Currently they are not able to have consumers access it. They have a four foot wall surrounding it, so they’re staff has to pour it for the consumer based on what their request of is 2 ounces of this, 16 ounces of something else, double ounces of one, so that’s the establishment.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): Thank you. And then the RFID card, so when you go to renew someone, are you able -- is there a picture on that, like -- so that you can know that the card matches the consumer? I’m just trying to understand how you renew the RFID card. Do you --

SAK SEEDASOME: So the way that we renew it is there are two different types of RFID, one for the consumer and one for our management staff. Those are the ones that the TIPS certified individuals will have. They’ll take the consumer’s one, place it against one of our tap walls, use their management card to then access and renew based on their assessment.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): So there isn’t a way, though, it’s not their picture shows up initially so that you’re certain that it matches the initial consumer that is -- so I can’t speak for the self-pour technology vendors themselves, but we did ask that question one time and we did receive for a consumer privacy reasoning, they did not want to capture that. It was more of this is the individual’s name that has a unique identifier to it for this individual and what they’ve since poured.

MATT VENTURA: So actually, I need to speak on that. As they were explaining it, the RFID card doesn’t
carry that because it would also carry the credit card that would be attached to that so if they were to lose that RFID card in the street or even on the floor and someone picked up, they didn’t want any of that information attached to it, right. The system itself will attach what’s in the system for that person and their payment card to the RFID card, but the RFID card itself won’t carry information b because of that security purpose.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): Okay. Thank you. And also, you know, what I understand is part of the reason that MacDonald’s has put in their self-ordering kiosks is that it’s the way people want to order, right, they are younger people and they want to reach them in their own idiom, right, that they would rather order that way and I would assume that’s part of this, that it’s part of the experience and that’s how a lot of people now want to order?

SAK SEEDASOME: You are correct. It’s -- The whole thing is about experience. When I first saw this in play in California and just saw how those consumers were using it, right, they're there talking about what their offerings were, they were sharing stories, they were not there to party up and get drunk. They were there to enjoy an experience and try new things out.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): And what’s the, again, the minimum? Is it one ounce or two ounces that you could pour?

SAK SEEDASOME: One ounce.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): One ounce, and so I guess -- Oh, he left, Representative Ackert, I was going to
say for Tim’s Tavern, he would save by no longer having to pour free samples since someone can go and do a one-ounce pour instead of asking for the free sample. Is that?

SAK SEEDASOME: Correct.

MATT VENTURA: That’s right. Every ounce that gets poured is paid for. Everything that gets poured is -- If it’s someone who works there that’s kind of cleaning the system or if someone’s there who’s showing someone use the system or pour it, every single ounce is attached to a card for giving us the ability to know who’s pouring it, when they’re pouring it, what they’re pouring.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): So it’s great for tracking inventory?

SAK SEEDASOME: Correct.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): Thank you. Are there any other questions? Senator Kissel.

SEN. KISSEL (7TH): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Welcome, gentlemen. Just a couple brief questions. First of all, I was always under the impression, maybe mistakenly so, that you're pretty safe if you have two beers to be under 0.08, but I always thought that the two beers were 12 ounce beers and now you’re saying no, the measure is 16 ounces and I’m just wondering is there empirical evidence regarding that? In other words, if someone gets the 32 ounces, drinks it like in an hour, are they -- would they be very safe to be under the 0.08 so that they could go out and drive home?
SAK SEEDASOME: I honestly don’t think that we can speak to that matter, but we can get back to on an answer on that one.

SEN. KISSEL (7TH): All right. That would be helpful. My second question is, right now, and maybe it’s antiquated, but we have what’s called Dram Shop Laws, such that the bartender or whoever is dispensing the alcohol, they have a responsibility to sort of monitor the clientele and if someone is clearly apparently drunk that they have an affirmative duty to shut them off. You’re now putting this card system sort of in between the bartender and the patron and in the states that have adopted this, if, as some of the examples that have been proffered, someone ditches off their card to their friend so that the friend eventually got like three drinks instead of two and was intoxicated and then got in their car and hurt someone, would the fact that that patron violated the rules of that establishment be able to be used as an affirmative defense to an action by someone saying there weren’t the appropriate safeguards to stop this individual from drinking too much and then driving and injuring someone? Do we know if that’s happened outside in these other states at all?

SAK SEEDASOME: So from the research that we’ve gotten back from the self-pour vendors, they -- not one of their establishments that use this system, from what we’ve been told, has ever been -- was sued for over-intoxication. The usual amount that a consumer pours is typically 29.4 ounces. The system has been around for about over a decade, a little over a decade now, and that’s the information that was provided to us by the self-pour vendors.
SEN. KISSEL (7TH): That’s a good track record. And my last point is this; you had mentioned that this card is tied into an individual’s credit card. I live in a world where people get hacked, identity theft, they lose their credit cards because others have accessed them and so they have to use cash, which should be fine. Can you use this system as long as an individual has some form of identification, driver’s license, state identification card, but I don’t have a credit card, they can still true up their account afterwards when they go to leave the establishment without having a credit card?

MATT VENTURA: Correct, yes, right. You -- It just -- The credit card would be a hold for the card, but if you don’t have a credit card, it’s fine. At the end of the day, you bring your ID card back to check out and you would cash out instead of using a credit card, so yes.

SEN. KISSEL (7TH): Okay, thanks. I’ve been really sort of hesitant to support this proposal in years past and I’m probably still a little bit away from doing that, but I just want to ensure you gentlemen and others, I’m not out there killing this bill each year, either. I just -- I’m just my own single little vote, but I do have concerns as we move forward and as much as I know that you have these other staff in there that you feel that there’s not a job loss, I think it’s a different paradigm, though, when you have staff that are sort of acting as policing agents, I don’t how -- what kind of tips those folks are going to get, as opposed to my wait staff person who is bringing me my food and my drinks who I want to reward because they’re doing good service, so you may have the same number of
employees, but I don’t know if the remuneration will be compatible. I just think that’s a question mark, but thank you for coming and testifying this afternoon. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): Senator Leone.

SEN. LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the second time. Just a couple follow-up questions, given that this is becoming popular, how would you address when it’s say a busy night at your establishment, do lines get out of hand or get -- does a specific tap get busy and how do you monitor it so that there’s not a rush or say an argument over who gets to pour, you know, in line for their beer or something to that effect and do you have like a popular brand, multiple taps to prevent that? How would you monitor that kind of situation?

SAK SEEDASOME: So our, again, just like any other bar, restaurant out there, right, we monitor -- we can. We have the ability to monitor how much is left in a keg, right, of beer or wine and we would preempt that with another one coming in or changing out that line, right. Just like normal maintenance, we would have to stop that line, turn it off for the moment, and reissue another type of beer or the same one if we have that in inventory. That is also why it is critical that we have the staff, the TIPS certified staff there, right, to monitor not just the consumers, but how everything else is running and operating because if a line does go down, then that is lost to our business as well, right, we want them to monitor and we want them to be working in proper order all the time.

SEN. LEONE (27TH): So you don’t see excessive lines forming, even on a busy night?
SAK SEEDASOME: No, well, the way that I -- When I was out in one of these places in North Carolina, one of the great things was there was so much selection to go by that you could try one and if that one was taken, you would try to move on to the next type of IPA or something else that was there. You would be able to try it.

SEN. LEONE (27TH): And last question, given how bars can be a popular place for events and so forth and just for making the event, you know, friendly to say the people that you bring or if you're an employer, how would one go about buying rounds for a table instead of having individual -- or that is not envisioned in that scenario?

SAK SEEDASOME: No. Unfortunately, it would be more you can VENMO me later for the beers that you just bought for me.

SEN. LEONE (27TH): Okay. I’m glad that you say that because I wanted to make sure that if it was to be offered, proper controls are in place and given that it doesn’t really allow for that, then if that wanted that kind of style, they would either need to go elsewhere or you have it in the traditional sense?

SAK SEEDASOME: Correct.

SEN. LEONE (27TH): Got it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the indulgence.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): We’re joined by the original champion of this legislation, Representative Arconti. I don’t know if you have anything you want to add?
REP. ARCONTI (109TH): Thank you, yeah, the original. It’s good to hear Senator Kissel’s -- he said probably, so that’s a small window maybe, you never know. But no, I want to thank you guys for coming up and testifying and being, you know, advocates for this and I’m sorry I missed your testimony. We also have a hearing going on in energy right now, but could you expand on, if you didn’t touch on this, how this would be a net positive for the hospitality industry here in our state?

SAK SEEDASOME: So it’s a net positive because in general, it’s what the consumers today wanted, right, it’s technology changes really quickly and you really have to stay ahead of it. Forty-five states already have this and we want to make sure that we get this to the people that want to use it here, right. Everyone we’ve talked to that understands the technology and what can be of it is extremely excited for it to be in Connecticut.

MATT VENTURA: And then that comes from, I think, one the creation of jobs that are not hospitality jobs, but kind of in the same ilk, correct? And also in the fact that our promotion of local, right, our promotion of local breweries and not just local breweries, I know we keep saying beer, beer, beer, but wineries, too, right, local wines, things like that. We’re trying to get this Connecticut connection going, right, to talk to, you know, CT Brews, things like that, to try and create these just interjections between people being in one place and not being able to go all the way to the other side of the state to get a beer, but can come to a location and maybe if they enjoy it that much, they do take that trip next time, right. I think that’s
where you're going to get a lot of that interjection into just being in that positive to the state.

REP. ARCONTI (109TH): Yeah, thanks, and I would agree. You know, one of the original in Kent of this -- doing this bill four years ago was to create more brand awareness around our craft breweries here in the state of Connecticut, which have expanded so much since then and are continuing to expand and also, you know, the original advocates back in Danbury was City Center Danbury, you know, because we had a property owner who was interested in bringing a restaurant to downtown and wanted to implement this technology as a way to help revitalize our downtown, to bring more young people downtown. You know, unfortunately, I don’t know if that fell on the cards or back home, but you know, I’m happy the others have taken up the mantel and are looking to bring this into our state and I’m hoping we can do this because I am getting tired of all my friends and relative sending me pictures of self-serve machines when they travel to just about every other state, but thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your indulgence.

SAK SEEDASOME: Thank you.

MATT VENTURA: Thank you, obviously. You kind of started it for us so we can hopefully pick it up.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): Thank you. Are there any other questions? If not, I want to point out, we also are trying to promote Connecticut cider. We don’t want to leave them out, so thank you very much for your testimony.

SAK SEEDASOME: Thank you
SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): Next, Joyce Wojtas. If you can just make sure the red light is on, so press -- there you go.

VINNIE VALENTE: Chairman D’Agostino, Chairman Maroney, Ranking Member Witkos, and Ranking Member Cheeseman and the General Law Committee. My name is Vinny Valente and I’m the training coordinator for UA Local 777, plumbers and pipefitters union. I am also a member of the plumbing and piping examining board for DCP and I was also privileged to serve as the director of the office of apprenticeship training for the state DOL from 2012 to 2015. I’ve earned many licenses in the state of Connecticut in plumbing, piping, medical gas, heating and cooling. I have many other certifications. A registered apprenticeship is part of my core of belief system and honestly, with the exception of a few people in this room, there is no one more expert about it than myself.

Connecticut has a deep, proud tradition with apprenticeship. The Fitzgerald Act, the National Apprenticeship Act is named after a congressman, William Fitzgerald. Before he left in Congress, he served here as a state senator and deputy labor commissioner. It’s a truly -- It’s a gold standard of training. What an apprenticeship does is combines the on-the-job learning with related classroom learning and from that a novice has a completely transformational experience and they go from knowing nothing at all, earning money over a four-year period, enough to put a down payment on a house. They come out with a capstone credential, which is typically our state license. There’s no better training, from my point of view.
There are aspects of Senate Bill 13 that are just contrary to what a truly well-run apprenticeship program looks like and how the path of licensing is recognized. The Section 3, subsection B, it will allow for a final year apprentice and/or a pre-apprentice to be onboarded and not affect the hiring ratio. I can see the value in a final year apprentice being given more autonomy because they're transitioning to that journeyperson status, but a matter of fact, to take a pre-apprentice who is typically a minor child and allow them to become the fourth person in a seven-person crew is dangerous and unsafe and we just shouldn’t do that with children period.

There’s already been compromises as discussed to the apprentice ratio in 2017, it’s three to three. The ratio relief process is simple at DOL. My experience was that less than 5 percent of contractors ever applied and over 90 percent were approved. The process is there to safeguard the apprentice to make sure that the sponsor that onboards the apprentice is competent to, you know, conduct a safe and productive apprentice and to complete that apprenticeship. In particular, there’s some aspects of Section 8, Sections 1 through 4. It doesn’t really recognize -- There’s already sufficient processes for any applicant to come to Connecticut and sit for a trade license. It doesn’t discern reciprocity from equivalency and there’s a difference between being reciprocal and making sure that the license you're sitting for is equivalent. The standards throughout all agencies is designed to ensure that any person practicing a profession is competent both in their knowledge and their skill sets.
Under perfectly equal circumstances, it would be easy to say look, you held a license here for a couple of years, you must be trained to the standards of the state of Connecticut. That's not always true. If you go back to the Fitzgerald Act and you look at the national system, it starts from the top down of bifurcated system. We here in Connecticut have a state apprenticeship agency, we’re all very proud of it, and half of the other states in the country have the federal system. Our school requirements are 720 hours in the mechanical and electrical and plumbing trades, they're 576 or less than the rest of the country. Not every state has licensing. Sometimes it’s a county license or a city license or there may only be a plumbing license or just an electrical license, so how do you really know? When you do all the combinations, you can’t make a simple matrix to say go from A to B to C, there’s just too much involved.

We have many levels of licensing. In the heating and cooling trades, there are probably at least 14 categories of different gradations up to the unlimited license and then there are several limited licenses in between, the same thing with plumbing, same thing with electrical. So having served on the boards and been before the boards many times, a candidate that sits for an unlimited license that may not be qualified for yet, more often than not the board says well, you qualify for this minimal limited license. Take this first and then they are always gracious and offer and say this is the training you need to do to come to the unlimited status, this is what you need to do to become a journeyperson here. It’s too much to go into what all the differences are, how we in New England use
heat and maybe in Florida it’s more centered around air conditioning, but there’s just too many possibilities to say you can simply hold a license for two years and that’s good enough. It isn’t.

The purpose of the legislation is to expand opportunity and that’s a good purpose, but we need to find the energy to concentrate on the folks that are here, already enrolled in bona fide apprenticeship programs, already licensed that are looking for work today. You look at the unemployment rate now, it doesn’t consider the unemployment rate for construction. I took a quick look at the LMI data on DOL last night --

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): Mr. Valente, if you could please summarize.

VINNIE VALENTE: So finally, last year, December 2019, there were 61,000 construction jobs. December -- From ’18, there were 60,000. December ’19, there are 58,000. That’s a 5 and a half percent drop. Where’s the jobs? In the room, I’m accompanied by 25 of my young brothers and sisters. We have 75 apprentices out of our 230 that are looking for work. They will go to work in their profession tomorrow if the jobs are here. They’re not here and to simply allow someone else to come in from the outside and take the jobs that these kids are training for is wrong. Thank you.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): Representative Ackert.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): Thank you and thank you for all your efforts in your field. It’s very well, excellent, and we appreciate all that and I do believe, like you do, that we have a very robust apprenticeship program and I would hold that up to
any other state and thank you for that. Can you, just for my -- and I apologize for not knowing this, how is the ratio done in the union as opposed to say an open shop company? How would you come up with the numbers? Is it people that are -- licenses that are in the union as opposed to licenses that are, you know, can you explain that for me?

VINNIE VALENTE: The ratio only affects the mechanical, electrical, plumbing trades, not manufacturing, so for our union, we onboard apprentices. We take our crystal ball, which is fuzzy, you know, what’s he going to look like three to five years from now, and we’ll take a class in. So we never get to the point we’re hiring, and we are a multi-employer, too, so we’re not a single employer, where we have too many apprentices and we don’t even go near the one-to-one on-the-job because the types of work we do, which is small commercial and industrial, that’s our niche, it’s very dangerous and apprentice is kept close to the hip for the first few years.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): But just if you could, is there let’s say a hundred trade licenses, is there 500 trade licenses?

VINNIE VALENTE: It’s about 18 to 2, 1,800 working journey workers and about 200 some apprentices.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): So like 1,800 licensed that you have?

VINNIE VALENTE: Yes, and also multi-licensed in our craft. We often hold plumbing and heating, sometimes electrical. I hold -- and medical gas certifications, so at any given time, I’ll hold three different licenses here.
REP. ACKERT (8TH): Okay. So let’s say 1,800, so the union could have a substantially more --

VINNIE VALENTE: We have 230. We can’t take any more now because the work’s not there. We started dropping off last June, we’re a bellwether industry, the first to go out and the last to come back and I don’t like the signs that it’s indicating. Construction jobs have progressively declined since last June.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): Thank you for that and thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): Thank you. Are there other questions? I just -- I do have a question for you and so in Section 8, I guess the reciprocity, it would go towards -- you would need to have worked for two years with a license in another state, but also to pass an examination here. Can you explain?

VINNIE VALENTE: Well, that’s what’s proposed and to sit for the examination, if you have completed a registered apprenticeship in another state and you have a gold seal letter and you send that off to DCP, the other state, they might question well, how many hours of school did you do because if we tell a Connecticut resident you have to do 720 hours of school, well, everybody that holds a license in the state of Connecticut should do that or they can appeal it before the board. Perhaps their trade experience is so extensive, I don’t mean two years, I mean blocks of five and ten and 20 years. That’s more reasonable. So -- And what did you train on? Did you train on refrigeration? Do you know anything about frozen ground in New England if you come from California where everything is slab on
grade? There are not less than subtle differences in construction types throughout the country.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): And so there’s differences, right, I mean, I would assume that’s one of the biggest differences is if someone’s coming from a warm weather state where they don’t have to deal with the frost line up here.

VINNIE VALENTE: And vice versa, right.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): Right. Now, but that’s not captured, the training or that you're knowledgeable about that. Would it be captured in the test?

VINNIE VALENTE: The process is already in place by the respective boards. You can go to the board. They're generally -- They’ll ask questions of the person, what type of works have you done, what type of courses have you taken, and they might say, in the instance of heating and cooling, you're not quite an S2 because you haven’t done refrigeration, you're not unlimited, but you're qualified for the S4, so many BTUs, sit for the S4 now, take these classes, and there’s vo-tech high schools. There’s many places they can get the course work. Often it’s two, three or four more classes that they need. The standard for the OSHA 30 that we have here in Connecticut, not everybody, you know, has an OSHA 30 as their safety course, it could be as simple as that.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): Thank you. Is there any other questions? Okay. Thank you very much.

VINNIE VALENTE: Thank you, sir. Thank you very much.
SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): Next, I believe is the commissioner. Not yet? Okay. All right. So next, Ben Zachs.

BEN ZACHS: Chairs and esteemed members of the General Law Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in regard to Bill 5295, AN ACT CONCERNING REVISIONS TO MEDICAL MARIJUANA STATUTES and I also want to thank Rod Marriott from DCP for his testimony earlier. My name is Ben Zachs. I’m the chief operating officer of Fine Fettle Dispensary in Willimantic and Newington and this is pharmacist, Rick Carbray, our CEO. Fine is a locally owned dispensary, as noted, in Newington and Willimantic. Our team is built of Connecticut residents and alumni. We are also a company that believes in being local and diverse. Our managers are first generation Korean-American and born in Puerto Rico and our local staff is local to the areas that we serve and are able to work with our patients in their first language, which we are incredibly proud of.

In regards to House Bill 5295, we fully support these updates to the medical marijuana program and believe there are additional changes that can be made to enhance the program. First, we very much support the lowered fees and the addition of qualifying conditions directly into the legislature. We believe that making this plan in extracting medication more affordable and therefore more accessible is good for the health and wellbeing of Connecticut’s patients. Today Connecticut is a state with “one dispensary rule”. We understand its initial intent and importance, however, this restriction has led to ensure patients do not -- however, we believe that it’s time to move on from
this. There is now technology, there is now various programs that we can use to allow patients to access medication from across the state based on where they are, not just where they're registered to and we think that the bill doesn’t go far enough just allowing it to go to the same group in the same ownership, even though we represent one of those groups.

The industry has changed, as noted, and our current program should change with the technology and changes that have gone. In addition, our current program actually allows for that technological change to happen within the PMP by being immediately uploading all prescriptions and all purchases into that program and we as a dispensary are already doing that. If someone were to be making a purchase at this moment in the next minute, you could go into the PMP and see that purchase. We do worry about the loss of fees coming into this program and what that does to revenue and we do hope that DCP receives the funding to be able to oversee the 17 operating dispensaries, the four growers, the testing labs to ensure the safety of this program and ensure that they can continue to operate it in an incredibly effective and efficient way like they have.

With chronic pain, we see the number of patients doubling, even tripling, over the next one to two years and they need to be able to have the funding to make sure that happens. There are a few ways that other states have dealt with this. One has been to allow out-of-state patients to come in and have a specific tax only for out-of-state patients on the medication and there are some other ways that we could do that. And lastly, we appreciate the
recognition of chronic pain in this legislation, but also hope that the ability to streamline new doctor-approved conditions right into the legislation or into a quicker way versus this long wait that we’ve had would be good for patients who need access to this medication, so thank you for your time.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): Great, thank you. Are there any questions? Representative Candelora.

REP. CANDELORA (86TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for your testimony. So you just mentioned and I was intrigued about the out of state, are there other states that allow for people to be -- receive medical cards to be used in their states?

BEN ZACHS: Yeah, quite a number. I mean, just right next door, Rhode Island allows it. I want to say Arizona allows it if it’s a qualifying condition that is also in Arizona, so if someone in California got it for sleep, they would not be able to go in Arizona. I don’t have more offhand, but I think there’s eight to ten across the country that allow cross purchases based on having a medical card from another state.

REP. CANDELORA (86TH): And do you know, is Rhode Island similar where do they tax Connecticut residents do you know or --

BEN ZACHS: Rhode Island actually taxes everyone 3 percent on all medical marijuana purchases, so we add no additional costs at the register. Rhode Island does to everyone. That’s just their system. They also do have a fee to sign up, but that’s their structure and it’s dependent on state. There’s a couple of other states that do take in tax on all medical marijuana purchases. We don’t want tax on
the purchases. We want to make sure that this is affordable, but, you know, we’re looking at getting creative about potential ways where our downfalls of this bill and revenue is definitely a thing that we recognize could be a part of -- could be a part of that.

REP. CANDELORA (86TH): Thank you.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): Thank you. Are there other questions? Okay. Thank you very much for coming up.

BEN ZACHS: Thank you very much. I appreciate all your time.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): Next, Commissioner Lehman.

DAVID LEHMAN: Good afternoon. Thank you for fitting me in here. I appreciate it. Senator Maroney, Representative D’Agostino, other members of the General Law Committee, I’m here to talk about S.B. 13 as an advocate and proponent of S.B. 13. My understanding is you’ve heard lots of testimony today, both for and some not for this bill, but I really wanted to focus on two main points of it that I feel very strongly about and I think it’s important that we get it on the record. You know, first when I think about the state’s economy and job growth in the state of Connecticut, you know, there’s a couple different ways we can do this, but one of which is, one of the most basic ways is, we need more people in the state of Connecticut. We need to grow the population of the state and we need more people being productive in the state, so more people doing more things. You know, there’s going to be more output and more growth for the state.
And to do this, we need to be welcoming and that’s just not welcoming to business and the business environment, but we need to be welcoming to people, making it easier for folks to get licenses, and this bill does lots of things. Two of the things I wanted to focus on are the ability to take classes on line and the ability to renew licenses on line. To make it easy for people to do that, I just think that’s something to make this state a lot more welcoming and it’s going to induce people and potentially help people to come to Connecticut, in particular when I think about trailing spouses, as an example. If a couple is considering a move to a certain state and it’s very difficult to get licenses for that spouse in a state, that could prohibit that move and limit people coming to the state of Connecticut.

So I think it’s really important that when we think about that through that lens, we want to be welcoming, not just to business, but importantly to business, but in particular to individuals, especially with this trailing spouse concept. We want to make sure that we are making easy to locate here and to do business here. The second point I really wanted to touch on is, you know, there’s been lots of research on licensing and I have the ability to read the governor’s testimony through Johnny Dach earlier, but I think it’s important to touch on what is the regressive nature of some of the licensure, you know, what we impose on folks as it relates to the training, how to get that training, how easy it is to come to the state of Connecticut and get licensed.

There are two points on this. There’s a lot in the bill on second chance hiring for folks that have
convictions, enabling them to get licensed and making it easier to, you know, create -- get jobs where there is going to be a living wage and beyond. I think that is really critical and the bill does that and then the second point on the on-line courses again, making sure that we have the ability to make it easy, inexpensive, and accessible for folks because it’s folks that don’t have the incomes that are potentially not able to get licensed into the jobs in the state. So making it simple and on line I think is just where the economy is going and it’s important that we compete.

And then the last point I mentioned is the point on reciprocity. Johnny referenced what Arizona did in the last legislative session. Enabling reciprocity with other states, especially with two or more years of experience, if an individual is able to pass the test in Connecticut, you know, from a competitiveness perspective, that’s how we should want to market ourselves to individuals and trailing spouses that are considered in the state. So with that I’ll stop and I’m happy to answer any questions that you may have.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): Thank you. Are there any questions? Senator Kissel.

SEN. KISSEL (7TH): Yeah, welcome, Commissioner. I know you weren’t in the room where there was an individual from Local 777 that came and expressed concerns about various aspects of the proposed legislation. I’m just wondering, when this proposal was developed, were various stakeholders brought to the table where folks from organized labor asked for their input? One of the major concerns that I glean from his testimony is that there’s just not a lot of
job opportunities out there right now, so if you increase the number of individuals searching for jobs, you put the folks that are already searching right now at a disadvantage. That was just one of a number of things that -- concerns that he raised and it just -- I always think the best legislation is when everybody’s sort of brought to the table. Maybe not everyone is happy with the end result, but at least everybody gets input at the front end and I’m just wondering if that process took place.

DAVID LEHMAN: Sure, it’s a great question, Senator, and I cannot answer directly if organized labor was brought to the table or what discussions were had or weren’t had as relates to this bill. I would like to address the point, though, and we can certainly make that a follow-up, but I would like to address the point on, you know, we have jobs in this state or we have people looking for jobs, the reality is that there’s a bit of a chicken or the egg here. I don’t think you -- You know, when you think what comes first, more people or more jobs, the states that are growing both jobs and population have some of the most competitive frameworks in terms of enabling those people to have those jobs and to have those opportunities, so I think we’re supposed to be growing both at the same time.

I think if we say we’re only going to make it easier to get licenses and jobs in the state when we have plenty of jobs, we’re not going to see those jobs in the first place if we have that framework. So we’re supposed to push on both at the same time, a more competitive business environment and you’re going to see more population growth and a tighter labor market as a result of that.
SEN. KISSEL (7TH): I appreciate that response. I guess I have a hard time being supportive of this at this time because of the concerns that were raised by folks that have far more knowledge about these issues than I do, but it didn’t sound to me that they were opposed to everything in this proposal. There were certain sections they had issue with, so I think there’s enough time in this short legislative session for parties to maybe get together. It’s always better for us and I’m just a regular member of this committee, not ranking or anything like that, but to have people continue their discussions to try to bridge those differences so that when eventually, assuming this gets out of this committee and it goes to the various floors of the House and the Senate, that a lot of these issues have been resolved by the stakeholders themselves as opposed to the leadership having to try to -- maybe they're experts in this field, but it seems to me a very complicated area with a lot of nuances and it just strikes me that there’s probably enough common ground that some of these differences either can be set aside or worked out. So I’m just urging that from what I’m gathering this afternoon.

DAVID LEHMAN: I will take that and discuss with Johnny and the Governor’s Office. I just want to make one last point, though. There is a significant amount of academic research, you know, that is apolitical, both on the left and the right, that suggests reducing some of these burdens and barriers is really helpful at growing wages, growing the economy, whether that’s on a state level or nationally, so -- and I’m happy to do that as a follow-up if you like. I don’t think one needs to be an expert to really appreciate the impact that
this can have on our economy, making it easier for folks to get licensed and to get good-paying jobs.

SEN. KISSEL (7TH): Again, I appreciate that and that’s sort of like a 30,000 foot perspective, but again, I know you weren’t here, but this gentleman has years of experience both in the Department of Labor and outside in the private sector, multiple licensures, knows what the process is all about, and I just think those folks are invaluable resources as well.

DAVID LEHMAN: They are and I realize I was not here and will take this as a follow-up, but what you do see sometimes when this type of legislation is put forward is folks that are already licensed and in these positions, you know, sometimes they are not proponents of this because it does limit competition, so we need to think about this from the state economy and all 3.6 million residents, obviously.

SEN. KISSEL (7TH): I’m not going to get in a back and forth on this particular issue, but yes, I understand. I’ve been here long enough, 28 years, that yes, there’s some turf issues that’s always out there in various dimensions, but also quite often those individuals are just vast amounts of historical knowledge. It’s that they understand far better than we’re going to learn in a short session or even a long session.

DAVID LEHMAN: Agreed.

SEN. KISSEL (7TH): And again, I know where you're going -- what you want to achieve with this, but again, I wouldn’t -- I’m not even stating that you're being dismissive, but I just think these
people have to be brought to the table, be heard out, and I think there’s enough common ground here that this would be a great bill to have before the Senate in some way that we could just put it on the Consent Calendar, so that’s sort of my goal.

DAVID LEHMAN: I concur with you in terms of the engagement and we will make sure that we’ll do that if it hasn’t been done and if not, we’ll continue to engage to try to find that common ground.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): Thank you. Are there other questions? If not, thank you for coming to testify, Commissioner.

DAVID LEHMAN: Thank you.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): Next, Jeff Shaw.

JEFF SHAW: Good afternoon, Senator Maroney and Representative D’Agostino, and distinguished members of the General Law Committee. My name is Jeff Shaw. I’m the senior director of public policy and advocacy at the Connecticut Community Nonprofit Alliance. The alliance is a statewide association of community nonprofits in Connecticut. Nonprofits deliver essential services to more than half a million people each year and employ almost 12 percent of Connecticut’s workforce. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 5298, AN ACT CONCERNING CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION TRANSPARENCY. The alliance recognizes that mission driven 501(c)(3) community nonprofits can be successful only by earning and maintaining public trust through high quality work, dedication to mission, and appropriate transparency, which can be guided by reasonable regulation that recognizes the unique
role community nonprofits play in neighborhoods and communities across Connecticut.

In regard to House Bill 5298, most 501(c)(3) nonprofits are required to register annually with the Department of Consumer Protection prior to any charitable solicitation. With initial registration and subsequent renewals, an organization is required to submit a financial form, most commonly IRS Form 990 of the most recent fiscal year, which includes information about the organization, its personnel, and its purposes. For organizations with gross receipts exceeding $500,000 dollars, they must also file an audit report by a certified public accountant. As required by the federal government, most organizations exempt from income tax under Section 501(a) must file an annual information return, commonly the 990. The document is public, hosted by GuideStar, Charity Navigator, and other national nonprofit data centers that shares information such as the organization’s accomplishments, governing body, membership, and financial information.

The 990 forms make sure nonprofits conduct their businesses -- business in a way that is consistent with their public responsibilities. The information in this form is standardized, which helps donors learn about nonprofits and may help them make -- or decide which organizations to support. Further, while not required by law, most nonprofits also produce an annual report featuring organizational highlights, overview of services, program outcomes, community impact, leadership structure. These detailed reports show how the revenue collected was spent on major programs and services and inform current and prospective donors.
Finally, all nonprofit providers that contract with the state to provide essential human services must also comply with cost standards, complete multiple financial outcome reports throughout the contracting period. Over the last few years, the alliance has worked collaboratively with state agency counterparts to improve the efficiency of licensure certification contracting processes. While there is still good work to do, outcome data and finance reporting are regularly being completed and shared by nonprofit providers to state agencies. So while the alliance, wrap-up -- While the alliance has no objection with disclosure in this bill, the organization’s registration number on solicitation forms, we are concerned with the requirements of calculating the percentage of funds collected in the prior calendar year that directly fund charitable purposes. It’s problematic for a few reasons. First, there’s no universal definition or formula of calculating how programs are funded. Nonprofits vary by size, mission, geographic location, other factors, and second, the uncertainty of state funding, federal funding, increased competition for private grants and changing donor incentives sometimes require organizations to use different resources for multiple programs.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): I’m sure Representative Ackert might have a question or two for you.

JEFF SHAW: Sure.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Representative?

REP. ACKERT (8TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate that. Thank you, Mr. Shaw, for being here and I appreciate all the work that you do with the nonprofits and, you know, the bill isn’t about
attacking the good work of the good charities out there. It’s about identifying the bad actors and the best way to do that is have those that are asking for donations to have an ability, you know, let the person that’s thinking of donating, whether it’s a phone solicitor or a pop-up stand at a, you know, a restaurant or something, which is what brought this to attention. There was a pop-up stand at a very recognized franchise, that the person was allowed to sit there and collect funds, and when the individual that was asked questions, they had no answers and then come to find out that they were kicked out of Massachusetts for collecting funds, but the franchise just thought it was a good -- yeah, so it would be great to have, you know, raising funds for this great, you know, this great organization, that’s wonderful, yes, please go ahead and set up.

And there was no way to find the information out until the person did a lot of research and looked into it and then said what can we do about this. Is there a way to have the solicitors have the information ready when asked? I think that’s a good way to do it, but you mentioned a registration number, are you now required to have the registration number on any pamphlets or provided upon request on phone or any solicitation?

JEFF SHAW: Yeah, it’s not -- I don’t believe, to my knowledge, it’s required, but it’s a good practice so I think most people -- most nonprofits that have to register, most of them do, would have it on the form.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): So I think that’s probably the best thing, Mr. Chairman, maybe instead of having
this audit process, which is something they do a great job in terms of the finance side, it’s just like all contractors, all businesses, we have to -- any advertisement that we do, a card, a proposal, our license registration has to be on that so that it’s significant to say hey, we actually registered with the Department of Consumer Protection, so maybe that might be the simplest thing is to have a here’s my registration, you know, you’ve asked the question, and you just have the registration on there so that they can go and do their due diligence and see maybe just a simple fix to this.

JEFF SHAW: Yeah, I think you might be right. Yeah, so again best practice is to be as transparent as possible. That’s what community nonprofits try to do and certainly want to give potential donors as much as information, especially the positive assets that they have, so that they would be encouraged to support their work.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): Thank you. Thank you for that idea and thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the time.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): I want to thank, Representative Ackert, you for bringing this to our attention and I think the discourse here is obviously good. I’d ask -- I mean, if you could work together, we’d love to get JFS language out that it seems like a pretty straightforward fix that we could do and obviously, we always hear the nightmare stories about, you know, charities that don’t really exist or funds are diverted for improper purposes, so letting people do some due diligence on the front end we think is a good idea. If we can’t do that, but I think we want to move your concept out of committee with the understanding
that it would be -- we would have this kind of fix, but if we can come up with that language in the next few days, I think that would be great. Other questions from Committee members? Thank you.

JEFF SHAW: Thank you very much.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Dan Mussen?

DAN MUSSEN: Good afternoon. I’m Dan Mussen, PA with Connecticut Academy of Physician Assistants. I practice in acute care out in eastern Connecticut stamping out Coronavirus. The Coronavirus is stamping us out, really.

MARK TURCZAK: Good afternoon. My name is Mark Turczak, current president of the Connecticut Academy of Pas. To the members of the General Law Committee, thank you for having us today. We’re here to provide testimony in favor of inclusion of the physician assistants in Raised Bill No. 5295, AN ACT CONCERNING REVISIONS TO THE MEDICAL MARIJUANA STATUTES. Physician assistants, or PAs, are licensed medical professionals who diagnose illness, develop and manage treatment plans, prescribe medications, and often serve as a patient's principle healthcare provider. With thousands of hours of medical training, PAs are versatile and collaborative. PAs practice in every state and every medical setting and specialty, improving healthcare access and quality.

Currently, Chapter 370, Section 20-12(d) of the Connecticut General Statutes allows the physicians with whom we collaborate to delegate functions to PAs. The one specified exception is in regard to the certification of conditions eligible for medical
marijuana, which specifically forbids PAs from performing such certifications.

With education and experience that meets or exceeds that of other providers that may certify conditions for the program, there is no basis for this exclusion for PAs for the ability to do so. By not including PAs, patients are forced to spend extra time and money to schedule additional appointments with another provider. Often times providers whom they are well known to when such a patient may otherwise exclusively see a PA for their care, exclusion of PAs creates a barrier to care and increased cost of healthcare. The conditions listed are already ones that PAs are diagnosing patients with and can certify for a number of other programs and benefits. These are conditions such as a diagnosis of cancer, Crohn’s disease, epilepsy, sickle cell disease, and many others.

Certifying such conditions for this program is not something that PAs are not already doing, just in a different context. We ask that PAs be fully included in this statute and appreciate your help in allowing PAs to provide the care patients deserve. Our goal is increase access for the patients -- increased access for the care for our patients and provide the best quality care possible. Thank you.

DAN MUSSEN: I do want to quickly add that we’ve met -- CONNAPA has met with the Department of Health, the Connecticut Hospital Association, the Connecticut Medical Society, Public Health Committee, so we’ve been discussing this and we seem to be in agreement that it’s unopposed so far, but we would like to, obviously, have this be a type of care that PAs can provide in Connecticut. It’s
merely certifying patients for these conditions where we certify patients for a multitude of other conditions and this is the one exclusion where --

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): You’d be surprised how many -- how often we hear it’s unopposed, it’s unopposed.

DAN MUSSEN: That’s what we hear.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): And then it’s opposed, so we’ll have to see how it goes, so --

DAN MUSSEN: Obviously.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): -- I guess I’d ask maybe some of longer tenured members of the General Law Committee if they remember why PAs were excluded originally from -- Representative Candelora.

REP. CANDELORA (86TH): Well, I’m just wondering if it wasn’t necessarily an intentional exclusion, but at the time when the last session was first established, I mean, it was controversial, obviously, in nature and so it was narrowly tailored to make sure that it was physicians that were addressing this issue and just I serve on Public Health, so I have a little bit of knowledge, you know, scope of practice and each inter-relate. You know, similarly we’re looking at the issue of vaccines and to what degree PAs -- in some of the statutes they’re in there to have authority to sign off on those forms and in then in other areas, they weren’t, and I think part of this is maybe inadvertent oversight. I think in this situation, it was meant to be restrictive and I guess my question would be, then, you know, PAs right now, you know, they perform physicals and sign off on things, so to what degree does the doctor have oversight, how would that work if a PA is signing
off on a medical marijuana card, how maybe the underlying physician would oversee that?

DAN MUSSEN: Sure. As of right now, there is still supervision, although we are seeking to change that to collaboration for PAs in the state of Connecticut and PAs will always work within that team, so we always envision that the physician assistant will be part of the team with the physician as the head of that team. It doesn’t necessarily mean that the physician is always in the building or that the physician even sees every patient that the PA sees. As a matter of fact, most PAs have their own panel of patients. In a situation where there would be a medical marijuana certification, the PA would then be the one that would be taking care of their own patient, saying that this patient we’re certifying that this patient has this disease, whether it be side effects of chemotherapy or whatever, but that’s PAs are doing as of right now, so it wouldn’t actually change our scope of practice.

It would just -- it would be changing basically the law that says that we’re able to actually register ourselves on the website, the Department of Health, and to be able to actually sign the papers so it doesn’t have to go through the physician. PAs also have their own DEA number. We’re also part of controlled substance. We also, of course, go to the Connecticut PMP on a regular basis to look at patients and their background and make sure that there’s not an abuse situation. We think that it was passed for APRNs several years ago because they were able to show a need and we think that at this stage of the game, there’s a good enough experience to show that APRNs, there’s not been a significant problem with their having this capability. So we
think it’s time for PAs to also be able to have that same capability within the healthcare team.

REP. CANDELORA (86TH): Thank you. I appreciate that. Thank you.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Are there questions or comments? Look, you make a compelling case. I think, from my perspective, just myself, I think I’d be interested in seeing maybe a joint statement from the Medical Society, physicians, DCP, and everybody and if everybody is on board, that’s great. I just think that would be of interest to see, but you make a good case.

DAN MUSSEN: Thank you.


JOE DEFUSCO: Good afternoon, Chairman D’Agostino, Chairman Maroney, Ranking Member Witkos, Ranking Member Cheeseman, and members of the General Law Committee. My name is Joe Defusco. I’m president of the Connecticut Heating and Cooling Contractors Association. I’ve held an S1, P1, and SM1 license and many certifications. I’m also co-chair of the ratio working group created by Public Act 17-76. I’ve been in the trade for 37 years as a student, apprentice, journeyman, and contractor. The Connecticut Heating and Cooling Contractors Association was formed in 1972 to give a voice to the open shop contractors which up until that time, did not have a voice at the Capitol. We represent hundreds of open shop HVAC contractors and vendors in this state.

The open HVAC shops in the state represent approximately 85 percent of the workforce in the
HVAC trade. On behalf of CHCC membership, I would like to lend our support for S.B. 13 with a caveat. We support the intent of Sections 2 and 3 of the bill, which seeks to provide some relief from the restrictive hiring ratio, but we feel more needs to be done. We believe the state of Connecticut has an excellent vo-tech education, apprenticeship, and licensing program. We believe the workforce development is an industry necessity, as well as a government priority. Before I go on, I’m going to assume everyone understands how hiring ratio and work -- job site ratio works. I don’t know if you need me to go into a complete explanation of that? I don’t want to be redundant because you’re probably going to hear it some more.

Some comments I’d like to make based on testimony that I heard. I’d like to say I have to agree with Mr. Valente on some of the points of safety from people coming from out of state or different regions of the country, but I think that the licensing boards are the final stop gap in that, where they can allow someone to take the test or which test they're allowed to take. One other thing I would like to disagree with is the 95 percent approval rate of the ratio relief. Over the past three years, it’s been about 39 percent approval and many of the times it’s -- you don’t get what you ask for. So say you ask for four, you might get two apprentices, which again, it puts a strain on contractors who are trying to hire new employees. Another thing I’d like to talk about --

REP. ACKERT (8TH): Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for being here. So I want to first ask, we had an earlier testimony about not having the work out there to suggest that we need more apprentices and change the ratio. What are you feeling in the shops, in the companies, that you represent?

JOE DEFUSCO: Well, we have a different business model. Many of our contractors handle a majority of their business would be residential replacements, add-on replacement business. Some of our contractors are now replacing equipment that they installed 25 or 30 years ago because that equipment is failing and there is more energy efficient equipment on the market. So our business model is more dynamic. We may have companies that have, you know, from 500 to 10,000 customers, so there’s something happening every day, there’s service calls, there’s something going down, so we’re in a constant state of flux with our companies. You can have two weeks’ worth of work booked and then a cold snap comes and all you're doing is no heat calls.

So, you know, to train an apprentice, typically you’ll throw them in a truck with a licensed mechanic and that kid’s going to run service calls all day and learn how to troubleshoot and learn how to repair equipment. If you’re doing an install, a residential furnace or boiler, it’s -- you’d like to see a licensed mechanic and an apprentice working on that job so you can train that apprentice how to do that job. You know, there’s really no need to have two licensed installers doing a boiler, they both should know how to do that, so that’s what our business -- how our business model differs.
REP. ACKERT (8TH): Yeah, and that was -- I actually made some trenches in a way because I’d feel the same and depending on the type of company you’re running, we’re having -- Right now, if it’s not once a month, once a week, I have an apprentice calling my company and saying do you have an opening and I say I don’t and you're right, there’s been this misinformation that you feel as though as a contractor that you're begging when you go to the DOL to get a ratio relief. It’s feeling like you're okay, I’ve got to go in and ask to hire somebody, to employ somebody, and pay them a decent wage. I have to go and I understand that, so I thank you for bringing those numbers, what they fall in between or whatever it is, but I know it’s not as simple as just going in and it’s granted to you on that ratio relief. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): Joe, you were about to make a final point in your testimony and the bell rang. Could you just go ahead and make that so I can --

JOE DEFUSCO: That was the final point was going to be the difference in the business model.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): Okay. Could you supply, and I don’t have your testimony in front of me, the Committee with some evidence of a request that was either denied or partially granted from --

JOE DEFUSCO: Yeah, we can get the numbers and --

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): -- so we can see something. Is there reasons given why the full request was not granted?

JOE DEFUSCO: Typically no. Typically you get what you get.
SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): So you apply and say I have a need for I’ll say three apprentices and you say I have X amount of journeymen that can work with these individuals, you may just get we’ll give you one without an explanation?

JOE DEFUSCO: Yes.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): Okay. If you could send some evidence of that along, I would appreciate it. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Other questions? Senator.

SEN. KISSEL (7TH): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I heard the gentleman from Local 777 and then I had this colloquy with Commissioner Lehman and it didn’t appear that organized labor perspective was brought into the proposal. That was just my observation. The Commissioner did affirmatively state that they would reach out and try to bring everybody together. Do you see that there should be any changes to Senate Bill 13 or you're happy with it exactly the way it is and were folks from -- that you're associated with, were they consulted in putting this proposal together?

JOE DEFUSCO: We were consulted after it was put together to discuss it and the only thing that we talked about was 2 and 3, that we would like to see more done on the ratio, but as I mentioned earlier, I thought Mr. Valente made some valid points about safety on people coming from different regions.

SEN. KISSEL (7TH): All right. So just myself, I’m sort of torn. I mean, is the cake baked yet or do you think this committee needs to work on those issues or should the administration sit down with
the stakeholders and try to iron out those last bit of differences?

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): That’s a semi-rhetorical question.

JOE DEFUSCO: I’m not a legislator, but I mean --

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): And I can throw you a lifeline just by saying that, for the Senator’s benefit, I know that the Governor’s Office and the architects of this are indeed, have been and are continuing to meet with the building trades.

SEN. KISSEL (7TH): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. You’re off the hook.

JOE DEFUSCO: Was that political humor?

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): It’s more of a comment and you can react to it or not, but you did mention, obviously, the safety issue which I think we all appreciate. You did mention the boards and I just want to make for the record, the problem there, of course, is that the boards have been effectively neutered by the North Carolina Dental Decision, they cannot anymore up or down, folks coming into the state, they don’t have that -- that’s unconstitutional and that power just -- that’s the same with DCP, although we’re trying to -- those have been ongoing discussions as well to make sure that there’s some way that DCP has the input of the boards with respect to those decisions, but the boards don’t have the oversight that they used to.

JOE DEFUSCO: That’s something I was unaware of. Thank you.
REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Thank you very much. Thank you. I appreciate it. Isabel Blank, the Yankee Institute.

ISABEL BLANK: Good afternoon. My name is Isabel Blank. I’m senior manager of external affairs at Yankee Institute for Public Policy and I’m here to testify in support of Governor’s Bill 13. So you have my written testimony, so I’ll just summarize. So we applaud the governor and this committee for addressing the barriers to entry for occupational licensing -- that occupational licensing creates in this state. Thank you for bringing this bill to a public hearing. Excessive licensing hurts many groups in Connecticut, including people with criminal records, military families, low-skilled workers, entrepreneurs, and of course consumers. I have the opportunity to serve on the employment subcommittee of the Council on Collateral Consequences and I’m excited to support Section 6 of this bill.

We also support Section 8 of this bill, which addresses the issue of occupational licensing reciprocity between states and I would like to offer a couple language change suggestions. So the first suggestion is the residency requirement in lines 160 to 164 should be removed. It doesn’t make sense for a geographically small state like Connecticut to have this language. The second recommendation I would make is the type of exam described in lines 178 and 179 should be clarified. The bill shouldn’t require a person to pass a second skills exam if they’ve passed an exam in another state, but an exception would be skills specifically related to Connecticut, so Connecticut state law, like real state law and things like that.
And then the third change I would recommend is to eliminate lines 189 through 193. These lines grant plenary power to boards to deny a license for any reason, so that’s already -- the power isn’t really necessary because concerns with criminal records is already addressed in two different places and then the lines could just cause bureaucratic delays or empower boards to protect status quo and the interests of current rent seekers in the different occupations that are licensed. Licensing recognition in this bill does not address Connecticut’s current licensing requirements, which can be burdensome, so I would urge you to consider additional reform to licensing requirements to ease elimination of licensing barriers in this state, so that could be enacting sunrise or sunset provisions or both would be great.

And the government should never stand in the way of using the skills that they already have to make a living. So we support the aim of this bill and to mitigate those issues and urge you to pass it and I can answer any questions.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Questions from Committee members? Thank you very much.

ISABEL BLANK: Thank you.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Steve Wanczyk.

STEVE WANCZYK: Good afternoon. My name is Steven Wancyzk-Karp. I’m executive director for National Association of Social Workers, Connecticut chapter, and we’re here in support of S.B. 13 as it pertains to social worker licensure. In Section 1 of the bill, it calls for having all professional licensing and applications and renewals having on line option
by July 1, 2022. When I read this, I said it’s about time. There are 7,000, over 7,000, licensed clinical social workers in Connecticut that all renew their licenses, as well as apply by paper, so it’s a state printing out and mailing and people printing out and returning. At the same time, there’s over 3,000 licensed Master social workers. Those are new graduates, so it’s a new license. They are all on line. So I’m an LMSW, I do everything on line. It makes absolutely no sense to us in this day and age are not happening on line and it seems like a tremendous cost and effort on the part of the state.

Section 6 will establish a consistent process for review of the applicant’s request when the applicant has a criminal record. Our experience with our members is it’s been really uneven over the years. Some people have simply been denied licenses for perpetuity. Other individuals have gone through tremendous hoops. We believe that when somebody has met their -- gone through sentencing, gone through parole, we believe in rehabilitation. We don’t believe that -- We oppose the ongoing punishment, if you will, if one person has successfully completed their sentencing. So clearly we think that this would make that process smoother, make it more even-handed, and hopefully would me it easier for individuals who have -- who are trying to come back and re-enter the community to allow them to do so.

In our profession, we have some folks who work for criminal justice system who were, at one time, sentenced in the criminal justice system and, you know, their value, what they can bring to a client, so is important and yet, it’s very difficult to license them.
Section 8 allows for a licensing candidate to have reciprocity. This is something that’s actually a trend in the social work field. There’s been a lot of discussion around different states about this. I’m actually on a national task force looking at this issue. It really -- Social work has the same group of licensing exams for every single state, so that’s not -- that wouldn’t be a barrier, but we do find that people coming into Connecticut find it very hard sometimes to get licensed. They have to prove supervision, they have to prove 3,000 hours post graduate experience, some of them literally have decades of experience. They can’t find their supervisors. Sometimes their agencies are gone, the supervisors are deceased, yet we’re telling these people well, we’re not going to license you unless you can show this. So clearly we are very strongly in support of this.

There’s one change we suggest in this section and that is it talks about licensure by state. We think perhaps the word jurisdiction or other word that would cover Washington D.C. and perhaps other jurisdictions that would not be a state license should be added because currently I read this as somebody coming out of Washington D.C., District of Columbia, would not actually be eligible because they don’t come from a state licensing board. They come from the district’s board. So we strongly support this bill and we hope to see it move forward.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Questions from Committee members? Representative Cheeseman, please.

REP. CHEESEMAN (37TH): Yes, with regard to that section and the question of reciprocal licensure, do
you think bill does enough in particular for your field, social work, in terms of the reciprocity?

STEVE WANCZYK: We think for social work this would work perfectly, we really do. I mean, this Department of Public Health does have an alternative process. If you've been licensed in another state in good standing for three years, but that process simply says you then have to get a letter from your employer showing that you've done clinical social work and that goes back to the issue of can you even find your employer. So we do think that this is exactly what we are talking about happening eventually we hope at a national level, so today would surely be the forefront if we were able to do this.

REP. CHEESEMAN (37TH): Thank you. Thank you for your answers. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Thank you. Other questions? Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

STEVE WANCZYK: Thank you.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Larry Vallieres.

LARRY VALLIERES: Good afternoon, Senator Maroney, Senator Witkos, Representative D’Agostino, Representative Cheeseman, and members of the General Law Committee. My name is Larry Vallieres and I’m testifying today on behalf of the Independent Electrical Contractors Association of New England with offices in Rocky Hill. I am the government relations chairman. I also am chairman of the State Electrical Work Examining Board, a member of the State Apprenticeship Council, member of the ratio review Subcommittee, as well as an appointed member of the ratio working group that was also legislated
back on the Public Act 17-76. I’ve also been an electrical in the business since 1972.

I would like to offer our support for the intent of Senate Bill 13 as it applies to our electrical industry. I recognize this bill is kind of broad-stroked over many industries. I’m speaking strictly on behalf of our electrical industry. Section 1, 2, 5, and 6 we support without exception. Section 3, 4, 7, and 8, we would like to offer some comments for your consideration. I would like to come back to Section 3, which predominantly deals with ratio, which is a longer discussion usually, and go to Section 4 first. Representative D’Agostino, I also as chairman of the State Electrical Board, I appreciate your comments earlier about how badly our hands have been tied as a result of that North Carolina situation. I appreciate those comments. Thank you.

Section 4, we do not agree that training for all occupations, neither pre-license or for continued education can be effectively administered and received by internet or distant learning means. While this may be acceptable as an example for accounting or real estate, it is not effective for all occupations, particularly those in the construction trades which are far more technically orientated and hands on. We would suggest and support that the following language or its equivalent be inserted in this proposed section 4; we would suggest the support that after internet and distant learning, that we would insert subject to the program being reviewed by the subject matter experts of the appropriate board and with their recommendation to the commissioner.
Section 7, in general, again in general, we take no exception -- Wow, that was quick.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): What does 7 do?

LARRY VALLIERES: We take no exception to the intent, however, we do believe that some language should be added in right after the reference of Section 46A-80, we would add with the advice and recommendation of the appropriate occupational board to assist the commissioner in making some of those decisions based on our expertise. And Section 8, we do support the intent of this, Section 8, but we, at the same time, caution regarding the terms utilized in it of license, permit, certification, and registration, they are too broad a term. A registration or a certification in other states means a license to those people; qualifications to get that certification or registration, okay, in many cases is a case of filling out an application, paying a fee with no real background, electrical background, or training or minimal training. So we would recommend that those type of applications would also go before the subject matter experts, the appropriate licensing board, to analyze the training that that particular applicant may or may not have had. Many states don’t require the OSHA 30. We automatically require OSHA 30 for all license holders.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Would you be opposed to like if we put a 30-day turnaround for the board? I think --

LARRY VALLIERES: Oh, yeah, I think that would be more than fine. As a matter of fact, our previous governor had required that all applications get reviewed and turned around within 30 days and that’s
pretty much happening right now, whether it’s by the entire board or a step down from the board, so we are processing that board, yes.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Okay. I think this bill is obviously a work in progress. You could send us -- I know you submitted on line testimony, but, you know, we always appreciate specific language changes so we can see, you know, in statute what people are proposing, so if you didn’t send that, please include that in your testimony. If you did, great and I’m sure we’ll get it.

LARRY VALLIERES: Yes, it is included and if I can just take a minute to talk about Section 3?

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Sure, real quick.

LARRY VALLIERES: Ratio is a problem in the open shop, okay. We have -- And I have heard from many contractors, I have had the same experience myself as a contractor, where apprentices or people that want to become an apprentice and learn the trade come and apply and because of the ratio, you can’t hire them, okay. The ratio starts out one-to-one for the first three categories, which is what I would consider a smaller contractor. Once you go beyond that, you're starting to get a medium or a larger contractor and it becomes three to one.

So the larger contractor, I don’t like to use this word, but is somewhat discriminated in that he has to meet a higher standard, okay, and yet they’re doing the same type of work as a smaller contractor, but the contracts may be larger and expanded over a wider period of time.

Safety should not be an issue because, again, it’s one-to-one training in the field, so I have some
further thoughts about that, but I don’t want to bore you all to death for the time-being. There needs to be a little bit more looked at that and I think some legislation still needs to be proposed to change some of that.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Thank you and then further, making sure that you're communicating your proposed changes to the governor’s staff and Johnny Dach in particular will facilitate this conversation as this legislation advances. Questions or comments? Representative Cheeseman, let me get the ranking member first.

REP. CHEESEMAN (37TH): Thank you, Representative Ackert. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a quick question, Section 8, do not lines 178, 179 address your concern, the person takes and passes any examination required of other applicants with a license, permit, certification, or registration?

LARRY VALLIERES: Well, there are people who can take a read a code book, okay, and pass an examination, which is what the examination is based on, okay, however, their practical experience, their hands-on experience may be lacking and sometimes it is. We’ve had many applications come in and have applicants come before us where they’ve got either plenty of schooling and not enough on-the-job training or they have plenty of on-the-job training and no schooling, so we have to take a look at that and make sure that that’s blended together appropriately.

REP. CHEESEMAN (37TH): Okay. I just want to make sure we’re not defeating the purpose of this particular section, making it easier for that, you know, military spouses to come and exercise their
occupation and set up another barrier, so I -- thank you for your comments and, you know, I’m sure as the good Chair said, you know, we will entertain ways to improve this, but I want to make sure we don’t gut this section and harm our, you know, efforts with the military.

LARRY VALLIERES: Yeah, and we do, when we get any type of military application, okay, we really work pretty hard with them. The little problem is sometimes there’s an electrician on a submarine, okay, it’s just totally different, so that’s why we try to look at the whole picture.

REP. CHEESEMAN (37TH): This is related to their spouses so, anyway. Okay, thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Representative Ackert.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and Mr. Vallieres. Is there anything I need to apologize? I kind of beat up the working group earlier, so I think since you said you're on the working group, my apologies. I just wanted different results from the working group, that’s all. So -- And so Section 8, you -- I want to go back to that because we have what we call, which we’re working on, the home improvement contractor registration, which means I send in a check and an application. I’m able to work in the field. Is that the type of registration you're mentioned, don’t compare that to the four-year programs that we have here in Connecticut in terms of, you know, you're getting all the approvals and years of experience to be able to have a new license? Is that what you're kind of --
LARRY VALLIERES: Exactly. In other words, don’t interpret the registration as a license because it is just that, it’s a registration.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): And that’s what I had thought. So and then, and I appreciate that answer, and then back to the Section 3, I’m -- I think I may know your vote/sell on that -- on that section in terms of what you thought we needed to do. In your -- in your organization, is there -- is there an outcry like we just mentioned with the heating contractor, is there people saying we just can’t get enough people to work for us, is that -- to fill those -- well, like to fill spots?

LARRY VALLIERES: Yes, the apprentices or somebody who wanted to become an apprentice and learn the trade, is constantly getting told -- many of them getting told I’m sorry, I’d hire you, but I can’t. I need to get three more licensed people, okay, and it’s discouraging, in my opinion, to that apprentice or pre-apprentice if you will, that wants to become an apprentice as to why should I go forward in this. I can’t even get a job. I can’t even get started, okay, and I may have started to do some of my schooling, but that’s the schooling part. I can’t get on the job. I can’t correlate schooling in conjunction with the on-the-job training, which is an important factor to have. So yes, there is a big deficiency there.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): And then pre-apprentice, do they have -- do they have a certain level that they can work? Are they -- What is the, in terms of the electrical for pre-apprentice?

LARRY VALLIERES: A pre-apprentice is typically somebody the age of 16, okay, or 16 to 18, who the
contractor can hire as a pre-apprentice. Unfortunately, he doesn’t have to be paid -- he or she doesn’t have to be paid the rate that’s the setup in the apprenticeship program, you just have to be paid at least minimum wage, okay, but it’s an opportunity for that pre-apprentice to get exposure to the trade that they think they want to get in. They are limited, okay, as to what they can do, okay.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): That’s what I was wondering because I think when you're 16 to 18 in the construction world, it’s a different job.

LARRY VALLIERES: That’s right. Now, obviously a pre-apprentice, you have some concerns over safety, okay, unlike a new first-year apprentice who is required to take the OSHA 30, okay, so a pre-apprentice, as I recall, cannot handle any power equipment, any power drills, okay. There is a limitation, I think it’s a maximum of 1,000 hours that the can work, okay, in the course of a year. You can have two pre-apprentices, each of them working 1,000 hours, but not the same 1,000 hours, not at the same time, not concurrently, okay, again, because of the supervision aspect.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): Thank you. Thank you for your time. Thank you for being here. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Thank you.

LARRY VALLIERES: Thank you.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Jen Jennings.

JEN JENNINGS: Chairman D’Agostino, Chairman Maroney, Ranking Member Witkos, Ranking Member
Cheeseman, and members of the General Law Committee.
I’m Jen Jennings, the executive director of the Connecticut Heating and Cooling Contractors Association, Connecticut’s premier HVAC trade association since 1972, proudly representing the interests of thousands, upward of 10,000, Connecticut licensees in the HVAC field. I’d be reluctant if I didn’t thank CHCC’s president, who is up here, and also one of the working members co-chairing the apprenticeship task force ratio. The amount of time that Joe has taken out, a lot like several of our members who would have loved to be up here today, however, they are day-to-day actually working in the field and unable to come up.

You will receive, I’m sure, a fair amount of written testimony that’s been submitted by each of them. From CHCC’s perspective, we do support Governor’s Bill S.B. 13, specifically Sections 2 and 3, however, there definitely needs to be some additional changes worked out on this portion of the bill. CHCC has worked hard and close with various officials, some on this committee, legislators, state departments, and other industry leaders over the years to try and break through this barrier. I have worked in various roles within the HVAC industry for the past 20 years, dating back to my first job working for a startup company in Stamford. Over the last two decades, I’ve heard the same story from hundreds of contractors from around this state that they are trying to grow their business.

The HVAC industry is more than just heating and cooling. It is a growing industry of everything from home comfort, quality of life, energy savings, and such that impact our state residents’ bottom line every day. It is an industry with tremendous
growth as we work hard as a state with one of our priorities being energy efficiency. What more could Connecticut want than a growing industry with workforce development and opportunities. There are several opportunities for jobs right now in the HVAC fields. I do understand that Mr. Valente mentioned that the unions don’t currently see the need and that there’s been a decline and to his point, I can see that. However, in the residential sector or in the replacement and the service industries, there has an actually been an increase in the demand right now.

So naturally what happens if the supply goes down as the contractors are aging and the demand goes up because the state of Connecticut is looking for greater energy efficiency, the cost goes up and ultimately costs us all as consumers, so there really needs to be some form of change in the hiring ratio to be able to meet the demands.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Questions? Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

JEN JENNINGS: Thank you.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Al Domeika.

AL DOMEIKA: Good afternoon, Chairman D’Agostino, Senator Witkos, and the other -- well, no other members of the General Law Committee. My name is Al Domeika and I’m the chief pharmacist for Acreage Holdings in Connecticut where I provide education and training to the pharmacists and staff in each of our operating locations in the state and we have three, in South Windsor, Bethel, and Uncasville, as well as nationally, and I still remain active as a practicing dispensary pharmacist at these sites.
I’m here today to support the revisions to the medical marijuana statutes in Bill 5295 and highlight a few talking points and also add a suggestion, if I may.

First, we believe that patients should have access to more than one facility as long as there is real time tracking, as it’s going to enhance our patients access to their appropriate medications that were suggested by our registered pharmacist. If the patient is seeking to obtain a specific product and that product runs out at that facility, the patient should be able to access that product at other locations, much like you see in the traditional pharmacy world. The way that it works now, if a facility runs out of a specific product, the patient either has to wait for that product to come back in which can take about several days or go through a transfer portal which can take up to 48 hours before they can go to another facility.

By allowing a patient to travel to another location, they can obtain that medication without any disruption in their therapy. Next, we do fully support reducing or even better, eliminating the registration piece for qualifying patients, as I’m sure you’ve heard today and at other testimonies, being a medical Cannabis patient can be very, very costly. It costs $100 dollars a year for a truly sick patient to just register to be a marijuana patient and that doesn’t even take into account the physician fees, which can be anywhere from $100 dollars to I’ve heard over $400 dollars, as well as the cost of the actual product themselves as it’s not covered by insurance due to federal law. These high costs can drive potential patients to the black market and also discourages current patients to
renew, therefore discontinuing therapy that actually may be helping.

By eliminating these fees, Connecticut can provide one solution to protect the medical program as stated as we have as recreational bills are being discussed. And finally, I’d like to ask this committee to consider a suggestion to be added to this bill. Currently patients only have one caregiver or allowed one caregiver and this can put a big onus on one person to be always be available to travel to an assigned dispensary and this also puts other legal bind as by law, they’re not allowed to handle medications for their loved ones. This is especially true for our pediatric patients. Right now, one parent or guardian can pick up their child’s medication and only that registered caregiver can administer it, leaving the other parent helpless. We’d like to see a provision in these statutes that would allow up to two caregivers per patient for these types of situations. Thank you very much. I really appreciate you allowing me to speak before you today and I’ll answer any questions.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Thank you, Al. Any questions from Committee members? Senator.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): Thank you, Al. Is it a common practice where they don’t because of competition that dispensaries will share their product with each other to accommodate any requests of a run-out?

AL DOMEIKA: Well, we can’t share product between dispensary facilities right now because the laws are mere pharmacy laws and this is a controlled 2 substance, so even like a Walgreen’s or a CVS, you
SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): And what do you see as the common prescription for marijuana, is an X amount of a day’s supply or what?

AL DOMEIKA: No, I think it depends on each patient and each condition and what we’re treating. You know, we don’t really have a supply problem per se right now unlike a couple years ago when we didn’t have a lot of product available to these patients, but there are certain niche products that patients – – we put a patient on that sometimes is not available or we just run out, you know, it’s just like any other retail store, sometimes you just run out of your can of prunes or what have you, but it takes a long time for us to get that product back, so in order for a patient to have access if they need that medication today, they should have that access, that same product.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): So just explain to me how does it work internally if you have five -- say you have five patients on a very niche type of product and they’re given a 30-day, I’ll say 30-day, prescription, so internally you must know, according to your records, that well, in 30 days these five patients potentially are coming back to get a refill, so do you monitor your flow? That’s what I was asking about when you serve a customer.

AL DOMEIKA: Yeah, and we do that. We do monitor how many patients get these certain products, but we see new patients every day. We see 10 to 12 new patients that comes in and maybe that same medication is appropriate for two or three more of
those patients and we can’t always predict what we’re going to dispense for future patients.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): Are you required to report to DCP if you don’t have the product available on a patient's request?

AL DOMEIKA: No, there’s no regulation.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): Because there’s been some testimony in the previous years about there’s not enough product available.

AL DOMEIKA: Yeah, and as I mentioned, in the past, there has been, but the producers have definitely increased their production and I don’t think it’s a supply problem per se, it’s just sometimes we just run out of a particular product, much like in a normal pharmacy. Sometimes you run out of a specific medication and our patients should be able to have access to that medication if they need it for that day.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): And what do you do in that case if you -- if you run out of that type of medication?

AL DOMEIKA: Well, right now, if that patient needs that product, we will look at other products that are very similar in chemical composition to continue their therapy, but sometimes, you know, there is a little bit of a difference between strains and composition because it’s a different product, so it may not work as effectively, so if someone’s on a stable medication, they should be able to still have access to that medication that’s been working.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.
REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Representative Candelaria.

REP. CANDELARIA (95TH): You can’t actually transfer product from dispensary to the other, but can you transfer the script from one dispensary to the other?

AL DOMEIKA: Well, it’s not a prescription.

REP. CANDELARIA (95TH): Oh, it’s not?

AL DOMEIKA: No, because it’s just a qualification, so when the doctor qualifies that patient, they come in to us and the patient talks to the pharmacist and we sort of do the quote/unquote prescribing, so there’s no prescription per se because that’s not legal federally, right? So it’s just a qualification, but we can’t transfer -- they can transfer from dispensary facility to dispensary facility, but there’s a transfer portal, so they have to fill out an application, submit to DCP, DCP has to review it, and then they will be put on their facility list, but it can take up to 48 hours and especially the DCP goes home at 3:30 on a Friday.

REP. CANDELARIA (95TH): So there is a way of doing it, but it takes a lot longer is what you're saying?

AL DOMEIKA: It takes a lot longer, yeah.

REP. CANDELARIA (95TH): Thank you. Thank you for that.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Any other questions from Committee members? Thank you very much. Thank you for your perspective.

AL DOMEIKA: Thank you.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Skipped over Joyce Wojtas.
JOYCE WOJTAS: Good afternoon, members of the General Law Committee. My name is Joyce Wojtas and I represent the Mechanical Contractors Association of Connecticut, here today to talk on Senate Bill 13, expanding economics and licensed operations. I can only speak to the licenses under Chapter 393, which would be limited to the electrical, plumbing, solar, thermal work, heating, piping, cooling, elevator, fire protection, sprinkler systems. I do want to state that the construction industry is designated at high risk, safety sensitive industry and I believe that originally stemmed from the federal Department of Labor. So that means that our insurance premiums are higher and all for liability insurance and Worker’s Comp rates and the whole thing. So anybody in the business today has to definitely mind their Ps and Qs.

I believe that the Section 3(b) 2 of the bill allowing a pre-apprentice to be hired, if you visit the statute that talks about pre-apprentices, which is CGS3123, Subsection C, it reads no minor under the age of 18 years shall be employed or permitted to work in any application which has been or shall be pronounced hazardous to health by the Department of Health or pronounced hazardous in other respects by the Labor Department. I think that when it comes to a pre-apprentice on a construction site, and I’m talking about the types of sites that our contractors get involved in, which would be commercial, institutional, educational, and industrial sites, that that construction site is no place for anyone under 18 years of age. As a matter of fact, your past governor, Governor Malloy, was even questioning whether they should move the 18
years up to past 21 to 26 at one time. That came up in this general assembly not that many years ago. But it doesn’t make any sense to have a minor working on a construction site that’s classified as high risk and safety sensitive. It’s a problem, a big problem.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Eighteen is not a minor, though, just to be clear, 18 is not a minor.

JOYCE WOJTAS: I mean under 18. Did I make a mistake? I’m sorry. I’m sorry. Also it doesn’t make any sense to require instruction for a hands-on construction trade to be taught remotely and I think that’s already been said. Hands-on means hands-on and the best method of teaching, from my understanding of the industry, would be to have someone not only in a classroom, which they do get to recognize different parts and functions and whatnot of equipment to also have the hands-on when they do on-the-job training. Connecticut, from my understanding, has no state that offers reciprocity to our licensees. I can’t guarantee that because I didn’t do that type of research, but that is what I’ve been told. I think that just offering someone a license or an avenue to a license without any look-back or look-see as to where that person came from, what type of licensing system the state has or the county has is so important because we’re talking about a safety issue because most of the systems that we install can be dangerous if they’re not installed by properly trained people.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Time.

JOYCE WOJTAS: Okay. The only other thing I’d like to say, have you ever -- when you travel, have you
ever been in a hotel where the hot water and the cold water have been reversed? In some states, they don’t even give licenses. They just allow people to do these installations. Now that’s not going to really hurt you unless you turn what you think is cold on and then jump in before checking it with your hand, but, if you have any questions.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Questions from Committee members? Senator?

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): Thank you, Joyce. Can you speak to Section 3 of the bill?

JOYCE WOJTAS: Section 3, right.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): The hiring ratios?

JOYCE WOJTAS: Oh, I --

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): I don’t have your testimony in front of me, that’s why I just wanted to ask you.

JOYCE WOJTAS: I talked about the hiring, the pre-apprentice. The final year of apprentice hiring isn’t a problem, but I do see a problem with the pre-apprentice and then again, I’m speaking from my industry’s side of the coin, which is the large project with, you know, for education, hospitals, industrial complexes and whatnot.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): I guess I -- Isn’t the pre-apprentice somebody that still retains a one-to-one ratio so the person that is a pre-apprentice is going to be right next to the person that’s going to be training them?

JOYCE WOJTAS: Yeah, but I don’t -- I won’t guarantee it, but in the heavy construction end of the industry, I don’t think you're going to find too
many of those unless they happen to be the son of the owner or the grandson of the owner.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): That’s a --

JOYCE WOJTAS: I mean, the pre-apprentice --

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): In my opinion, that argument is very vague to preclude folks from employment and how can they get to -- We’ve heard from folks already testifying that their phones are ringing off the hook looking for apprenticeships and to make it vague to say well, if you’re the owner’s son, you’d probably be side by side, but anybody else, even though the statutes are very clear saying it has to be a one-to-one ratio, we don’t believe that. You’re just going to be the stray person walking around the construction site?

JOYCE WOJTAS: No, but if you're pre-apprentice, you’re sponsored by someone to begin with so that’s where you would be on a construction site from your sponsor. I don’t think you’ll find too many contractors in the heavy construction industry that have pre-apprentices simply because it’s, you know, ask an insurance agent what do you think if I bring, you know, some pre-apprentices on my job site? It’s just not a healthy idea for the heavy construction industry I’m talking about. I’m not commenting on residential construction at all.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): And give it to me again. Who would be involved in the heavy construction again you’re talking about you represent?

JOYCE WOJTAS: I have the mechanical contractors who do heating and air conditioning systems and medical gas and all that, which are usually big projects, a big construction.
SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): So somebody’s putting in a building in downtown Hartford or doing a renovation.

JOYCE WOJTAS: Yes.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): You’re saying that somebody would never have a pre-apprentice on a job like that?

JOYCE WOJTAS: More than likely they would have a regular apprentice who is 18 years of age, more than likely.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Okay. You’ve got some good arguments against this bill. I’m sure you're working with the administration on it. I’m going to agree with the Senator that this bill probably isn’t your best one, so.

JOYCE WOJTAS: Well, I mean, you know, if you want to put kids on construction sites, you know, let the person, I guess, if they want to take that responsibility and they want to pay higher premiums. I just can’t see --

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): They wouldn’t have hired him, they wouldn’t be paying the premiums, they wouldn’t be offering the training if they didn’t want that individual there is my point.

JOYCE WOJTAS: True.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): So why would we want to exclude them arbitrarily just to say well, we, whoever we is, don’t think they belong there. That’s my only point.

JOYCE WOJTAS: Well, I think they're -- I mean, they’re young to begin with and are they going to pay attention?
REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Like I said, probably not your best argument. Are there any questions or comments from Committee members?

JOYCE WOJTAS: Well, I mean --

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Other questions or comments from Committee members? Thank you, Joyce. Chris Fryxell.

CHRIS FRYXELL: Good afternoon, Chairmen D’Agostino, Maroney, Ranking Members Witkos, Cheeseman, and members of the Committee. My name is Christopher Fryxell. I am the president of the Associated Builders and Contractors of Connecticut. We are a statewide trade association representing over 200 companies that represent merit shop construction. I’m testifying on behalf of those members, as well as a member of the somewhat maligned ratio working group that’s been referenced a couple of times today. We truly do appreciate Governor Lamont and the focus that Governor Lamont and his administration has put on workforce development and we applaud the efforts contained in this bill to increase training and career opportunities for residents of Connecticut.

I’m here to tell you that the shortage of skilled craftsmen that we experience across the country is real. There are hundreds of thousands of open jobs across America today and that number is going to increase as we have an aging workforce and we’re doing a very poor job or supplanting or bringing new young people into the trades. It’s a big problem with difficult solutions, however, one of the things discouraging young people from entering the construction industry in Connecticut is the arbitrary hiring ratio that the state imposes on
really just six specific trades. I know you're very well versed in the hiring ratios, so I won't go into too much detail other than to say that it’s our position that we believe that the hiring ratio should be one-to-one across the board to match the job site ratio.

That being said, we agree with the intent of Sections 2 and 3 of this bill, although I believe some edits are needed and I’ll spend the rest of my time, I think, talking about that. In lines 32 through 36, it allows for the additional hire of one last year apprentice. The concern I have with that is a last year apprentice is likely gainfully employed in the last year of their training and so we want to avoid creating a market where that last year apprentice is being sought after by competitors, other companies, etc. What perhaps is a better approach would be to exempt last year apprentices from the hiring ratio, so you’ve got these apprentices that have gone through the majority of their training, a company has invested quite a bit of time and resources in that individual and now for those -- for the purposes of the hiring ratio, perhaps they wouldn’t count.

What that would do is it would create some relief for the hiring ratio. It would encourage apprentices and contractors to follow through with the training of the apprenticeship program, and I think it would then allow the contractor to bring in a new apprentice who’s not already been working in the industry for, you know, three plus years. The way it’s drafted now, again, we agree with what I think the intent is, but if you're only able to hire one last year apprentice, that means you're not bringing someone new into the industry, which is
what I think our goal should be. And then one more thing I’ll address, there are different business models, so I represent a wide variety of contractors, different trades, different sizes. Some of them are doing really well. Some of them are working hard to stay above water, but for those contractors that are doing very well and want to expand and grow their companies, we shouldn’t be limiting the hiring that they're able to do.

So a previous individual talked about an 18 to 2 journeymen to apprenticeship ratio based on some forecasting that they’ve done, that’s their prerogative. Of course, the hiring ratio is a maximum number of apprentices you can hire, it’s not a minimum, but for those companies that are doing really well and want to hire and have the opportunity and ability to hire while maintaining the safety of the one-to-one job site ratio, the state should not stand in the way. So with that, I’m happy to take any questions that you have.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): You’re measured in an undergraduate degree program in school by the number of credits you completed and this language, we’re talking about last year, how is that determined? I know it says 75 percent, but is that measured by how many hours you have completed when you're saying last year and what is the total amount of hours you have to have completed?

CHRIS FRYXELL: Yeah, so I would say number of hours completed. There’s, of course, related instruction hours that you must complete and on-the-job training hours.
SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): I’m talking specifically to like the work experience hours.

CHRIS FRYXELL: so 720 hours, I believe, was testified to earlier, so -- which is a requirement here in Connecticut. Other states, which was testified to, the hours are lower, but.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): So under the statute here that’s being proposed, you’d have to have 75 percent of the 720 hours to be considered a last year?

CHRIS FRYXELL: Right.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): There’s nothing that -- What happens if it’s somebody taking ten years or longer to get to that 75 percent, so necessarily be in the last year, say they were only doing it on a part-time basis because they’re in another career and they want to move into becoming, you know, an apprentice or get their licensing in the trades? How do you address that?

CHRIS FRYXELL: In that case, I mean, there are instances where individuals, you know, take a different track in completing it and with our program, it’s typically four years. I think you would look at the certified hours because the sponsor registers that individual with the state and there’s certified payroll, etc., so the state is collecting that information, so I think the 75 percent rather than getting hung up on which year, you know, likening it to perhaps a traditional Bachelor’s degree, making sure that the percentage of that work is completed is probably a better way to go.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): I only ask because we’ve heard comments about exempting -- taking the last
years out and how would you feel if there was something in the bill that said that if you're considered a last year, you have until how many ever months it would be, 12 months, 18 months, to complete the licensure to journeymen, otherwise you can’t be considered a last year so it’s not dragged out forever?

CHRIS FRYXELL: Yeah, I think the scenario that we’re sort of creating here, where that individual might be exempt for the purpose of the hiring ratio, I think it makes sense in that case to, you know, he can’t be a last year forever, therefore finding a way around the state mandated hire ratio, I think that makes sense.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Other questions from the Committee? Representative Ackert, please.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Fryxell, for being here. In your -- So who you represent, you say they’re similar, they’re looking to hire more people, get more people working in the trades, and they’re limited. They have a cap with their apprentices?

CHRIS FRYXELL: That’s right, and different than some of the people who have testified so far. My members are commercial industrial. We’re not really residential construction, but that’s correct and we have -- and again, we lose members some years because they’ve gone out of business and so they're no longer members of ABC because the company doesn’t exist. Other companies, that’s absolutely correct, they're growing, they want to continue to grow, they're doing things the right way, they're getting more work, and they're sort of hamstrung by that hiring ratio.
REP. ACKERT (8TH): Do your members use the ratio release program, the ratio relief program?

CHRIS FRYXELL: Some of the do, yes.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): Have they found hurdles with it at all or are there any issues that have brought to your attention?

CHRIS FRYXELL: Yes. So the ratio relief program, I think, you know, there are other people who have got the statistics that have testified earlier, but I believe 60 percent of the apprentices that are applied for are granted and 40 percent are denied. I think it’s a subjective process, not to say that those individuals ruling on whether or not to approve or disapprove the apprentices are doing anything malicious, I think it’s necessarily a subjective process.

There’s also issues -- concerns about FOI, so when you apply for apprentice, you’re submitting a form with company-specific information to the Department of Labor, which would then be subject to FOI and we still struggle, quite frankly, with educating contractors about the existence of the program. I think that ratio relief is flawed because it really just stands as a barrier to the workforce development that, you know, the administration in this committee is trying to achieve. There aren’t -- There aren’t the same hiring ratios in manufacturing, for example. They don’t have a ratio relief process. This building, there’s a lot of talk about how to increase apprenticeship in manufacturing and quite frankly, other areas as well. These six trades are the only ones that have to deal with the hiring ratios set by the state and
so this ratio relief process doesn’t really need to exist.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): You just made a fantastic point that I have not heard before. Before I go any further, I think I owe you an apology because I kind of beat the working group earlier, so I think I also owe you an apology. I think I’m going to go one by one, so my apologies, but you made a great point. We already have an on-site one-to-one ratio by law.

CHRIS FRYXELL: Right.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): If you break that, you're brought up on, you know, to the Department of Labor and there’s trades that are building airplane engines and parts for airplanes that they can have as many apprentices working on those parts as they want, but we’re putting in, you know, light fixtures, you know, and framing and things like that. We’re not building airplanes, so you make a great point in terms we already have a predetermined ratio on job sites by law.

CHRIS FRYXELL: Right.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): The hiring is a -- We’re gerrymandering it again as far as I’m concerned, but were’ -- but I always work with the -- so this could be brought up in General Law to find out what would be it seems like a simple answer, but thank you.

CHRIS FRYXELL: And again, we’re not looking to change the job site ratio and that exists for a reason and, you know, I go -- I attend a lot of industry related events and a lot of what we talk about is how do we get more young people, you know, middle-schoolers, interested in the construction industry because not enough kids are going into the
industry and yet on the back side of that, we’re limiting how many of them we can hire, so I think those two things are inconsistent.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): You’re also not allow to job shadow in our trades, did you know that? I asked if somebody just wanted to I’m thinking about getting into the trades in high school and I’m not really college-bound ready, I called the State Department of Labor and said can I do job shadow and they no they can’t unless you're registering them. I like no, they’re in high school, I just want them to job shadow. They cannot be with your technicians on a job site. We’re not allowing people to learn the trade even by job shadowing.

CHRIS FRYXELL: Right.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Other questions or comments? Thank you very much.

CHRIS FRYXELL: Thank you.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Marc Okun, Carpenters.
Give us a little something else to chew on instead of Senate Bill 13, Marc.

MARC OKUN: And this is a little different, Raised Bill 250. Good afternoon, Senator Maroney and Representative D’Agostino and members of the General Law Committee. My name is Marc Okun and I’m a business agent in the Greater Hartford area for the North Atlantic State’s Regional Council of Carpenters, which represents more than 30,000 union carpenters throughout the six states of New England and most of New York State. I’m here today to express our concerns about Raised Bill 250, which
would have a negative -- would have negative impacts on Connecticut commercial and residential construction industry. Raised Bill 250 would, pursuant to Section 20-232 of the General Statutes add a definition of pre-glazed or pre-assembled regarding flat glass as a window or door product which comes from a factory where glass, finished or unfinished, has been installed due to a structural frame and the edges of such glass shall not have been exposed at any point post manufacturing process.

Our concern is that this language could impact the current exemption of a person who installed pre-glazed or pre-assembled windows and doors in residential or commercial buildings. As the law is currently written, tempered glass with a finished edge is interpreted as a pre-glazed product, allowing for installation by unlicensed individuals. Over the years thousands of construction workers, both union and nonunion, have installed the following tempered glass products with prefinished edges; glass marker boards to demountable partitions, frameless picture frames, frameless shower doors, glass tops on reception desks, showcases, cabinets with glass doors, glass railings on decks. We’re concerned that any new definition would remove the exemption and require a license to do assembly on routine tasks such as listed above.

I have attached some photos so you guys can see on pages 3, 4, and 5 of the packet, basically going through page 3 is the demountable partitions that are installed by carpenters, page 4 would also be demountable partitions, 5 is showcases and millwork, and 6 would be some frameless shower doors. This would adversely impact thousands of construction
workers, both union and nonunion, who have performed these routine installations of tempered, prefinished glass products over many years. This bill would create an unnecessary burden in cost to workers, contractors, and construction users. There are currently approximately 312 licenses flat glass installers holding an FG2 and 144 licensed flat glass contractors in FG1 in Connecticut, according to the Department of Consumer Protection.

Unfortunately, jurisdictional disputes between trades who look to claim similar work are not uncommon, either. Attached is a recent example of an NLRB decision from 2018, where the Allied Trades attempted to claim work installing shower doors and demountable partitions on jobs in Massachusetts. Fortunately, the NRLB rules in favor of the carpenters union and their employer. These jurisdictional disputes don’t just occur in Massachusetts. Recently in Connecticut a representative from the Allied Trades, which includes the glazers, visited the Gant Science building at the University of Connecticut and attempted to shut down production. The glazing contractor had subcontracted the demountable partition work to a company that was certified by the manufacturer to install their product using carpenters.

New York City and Boston are the nearest locations to Connecticut where more commercial glass is installed than Connecticut; neither New York or Massachusetts requires glazer’s license. We understand that there have been many efforts to codify this for more than ten years, but we are concerned that this may be an attempt by the license trade to practice licensing overreach. To us, we’re
worried that this is a solution to a problem that doesn’t exist when it comes to installing tempered glass or prefinished glass products. We reached out to the representatives of the Allied Trades Union on several occasions to meet and discuss our concerns with the bill, but were unsuccessful. Thank you very much for our concerns.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): So just for the laymen, when we’re talking about, you know, putting in, you know, a third floor, a new building, glass all the way around. That’s not what the carpenters are saying that they --

MARC OKUN: Correct.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): When you're talking about a shower door that’s finished or a door in a building that’s got glass in it, then the door’s in wood and you put that in, that’s what you're talking about. Correct?

MARC OKUN: But also demountable glass partitions, so office buildings. If you walk down an office hallway, there will be like an aluminum frame and the glass comes from the manufacturer and it’s set in place and stuck together with tape, essentially, so they sell it, in a sense, for two reasons; so they can depreciate the value over time because it’s a write-off because it’s furniture and two, they can move around the office space a lot faster because nothing’s fixed. So it’s tempered glass, so it’s considered a finished product so carpenters install it when they’re assembling the rest of the furniture, but also if you think about a frameless shower door, if when you go to Home Depot, it’s very common, it’s very popular now, but also you don’t
think about all the other things like a display case, the doors on that.

So when we install millwork, the glass gets normally sent separately and we install the glass later because, as you hear, there’s a lot of trades on construction sites, they’re very busy, things break, so the person who owns the millwork would end up having to pay for the glass to get replaced, so we would do that in the field. You know, there’s 444 – 456 people in this state that hold a glazing license and there’s thousands of people that install glass every day. So it almost, you know, it feels as if there’s a solution to a problem that doesn’t exist and this has been going on since 2006, from what I read. You know, there’s a lot of people that are trying to get this to -- a little bit of overreach.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): And when there is an issue, if there is a job site issue that gets -- that can’t be resolved, is it DCP the ultimate arbiter of that?

MARC OKUN: I would imagine, yeah. So the -- Since the way the law is interpreted right now, pre -- tempered glass is considered prefinished, it pretty much slows things down right away because if it’s already finished and it’s considered pre-glazed, then you don’t need a license for it and that’s where we are.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Questions? Senator, please.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): I just want to follow up on the Chairman’s questioning. You had said in your testimony that there was an issue and they attempted to shut the job down, so how was that resolved?
MARC OKUN: I explained to them that it’s a prefinished product and it’s exempt from the license. So when they went into the -- It was actually --

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): Was it a complaint filed with DCP, that whole thing?

MARC OKUN: No. So they go in and they will tell the superintendent that you can’t do this, they need a license, and you need to stop working and then they call me and we explain to them here’s where it is and the glazers would have the opportunity if they wanted to pursue it to DCP, they could, but I’m not going to call DCP and have them fight -- explain the law to them.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): So they took your definition, agreed, and said thank you very much?

MARC OKUN: Yeah, so I don’t know if you’re familiar with the Project Labor Agreement, so in East Hartford at the Pratt and Whitney project, big headquarters, $550 million dollar project, was a Project Labor Agreement and carpenters installed every single piece of demountable partition in the building, including if you look, I don’t know if you guys have the pamphlet in front of you, it -- the doors didn’t have any frame on it and we were subcontracted once again from the glazing contractor to do this work. They brought it up and on those jobs, they would actually have the opportunity to say hey, this work belongs to us and we could sit and go back and forth, but they chose not to.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.
REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Other questions for Carpenters? Thank you, Mr. Okun.

MARC OKUN: Thank you.


RICH BIRD: Good afternoon, Senator Maroney, Senator Witkos, Representative D'Agostino, and Representative Cheeseman and the other members of the General Law Committee. My name is Richard Bird. I am here to testify on behalf of the Independent Electrical Contractors as the vice-president and senior instructor. I am also a subject matter expert to review electrical curriculum with the Connecticut Office of Higher Education. I’ve been in the electrical industry in the state of Connecticut since 1984, first as an apprentice, then as a licensed electrical contractor and partner in Shea’s Electrical, Inc. I would like to offer the following comments concerning Senate Bill 13 for your consideration.

As a senior instructor with the IEC, a nationally recognized and locally approved apprenticeship training program, many of our apprentices that you've heard are very frustrated with being able to find positions, open positions, in the electrical industry. With the aging of our skilled workforce, we need to train the next generation of skilled workers to keep the state competitive in the future. As well as an electrical contractor, I feel the senate bill is the step in the right direction. The current hiring ratio, as you know, stifles workforce development in the state of Connecticut. The working ratio, I’m not going to repeat that, you've heard that numerous times being one-to-one, it does, however, limit medium to larger contractors from
hiring and training additional skilled workers needed to move forward in the electrical industry.

As an instructor, both in apprenticeship and Connecticut electrical continuing education programs, I’d also like to address the on-line training. For continuing education, I would support an on-line program that is thoroughly reviewed by subject matter experts to ensure that it has the applicable content needed for this continuing education. For apprentices, I would not support an on-line program. It is very important for safety of the apprentices and consumers that these programs are instructor-led presence. There is also -- This also allows for the transfer of knowledge between an experienced instructor and the apprentices in these programs. The information and knowledge is being presented to these individuals generally for the first time. the instructor-led programs ensure that the participants fully comprehend the subject matter being taught. We are a hands-on skilled trade which makes this instructor-led format a very critical piece to the learning environment.

This allows the instructor to model and observe proper applications of the subject matter at hand, which also leads to the importance of the interaction of the instructor with the students. If I may, I would like to address a couple issues that we spoke about earlier.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Quickly.

RICH BIRD: Thank you, Senator Witkos, you had asked about the last year apprentice and what that was based on and it was brought up about the 720 hours, that is just one portion of that. In the electrical industry, it’s four years, 8,000 hours, so that’s 75
percent would be approximately 6,000 hours on the job. Hopefully that answers a little bit further into detail into your question. Also it was talked about on the ratio relief that -- about the approvals to denials. The approvals are approximately -- I’m sorry, the denials are approximately 60 percent with the approvals being about 40 percent, which would -- which would basically talk about 300 jobs or approximately 300 jobs that were denied to a lot of us electrical contractors or skilled trade contractors period.

Also, again, I would just like to thank you guys for the opportunity to submit my testimony. I have submitted it written as well. Should you have any other questions and would like to get in contact with me, please feel free to email me or you have --

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Senator Witkos has a couple of questions for you.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman, I do, Rich. Speaking to the 60/40 that now, since I’ve gotten here, there’s been three or four people that have testified to that and that’s an aggregate amount and I’m more interested, while I understand that because of perspective on an individual basis, as to are you receiving justifications as to why the request was not granted or reduced by what it was? I’d be curious to have some evidence of that be sent to the Committee so we can take a look at that and you had stated that you’d like to see on the educational side, not the work experience side, an on-line education curriculum to be approved by the trades, but I would -- if we go in that direction, I’d also like to see a drop deadline that if you don’t comment or approve by X amount of time, then
it’s deemed approved because I don’t want something
to get caught up in a delay tactic, not on purpose,
but just because, you know, people’s opinions vary
and, you know, we want to move this forward, I
think, and I’d like you to just comment on those two
 things.

RICH BIRD: Yeah, first on the ratio relief, yes,
the majority of the approvals that come back, you
know, it’s been stated before that if you ask for
four, you’ll generally get two, so the request is --
usually comes back with a denial or with a lower
number that what was originally asked for. So in
that case, you know, you're looking at a 50 percent
decrease in the actual amount of apprentices that
the contractors could take on. As far as your
comment about the continuing education being brought
on-line, I do agree with you that there should be
some sort of timeframe that these programs are
approved. That is currently in place now. We have
to submit our curriculum for our continuing
education on a yearly basis, based on in our case,
the electrical work board and they tell us the
curriculum and the content that we are going to
train on in that specific year. And you usually get
approval somewhere between the 30 -- about 30 days
on the curriculum on the continuing education.
Hopefully that answered your question.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): It did and previous testimony
was there are certain jobs that are considered
hazardous in and of themselves or on the specific
job site. Could you speak to that?

RICH BIRD: Yeah, you -- I’m going to assume that
you are talking about the pre-apprentice position in
this particular situation. It is very limited to
what the pre-apprentices can do and where they can work; state regulations, the Department of Labor, has regulations based on that. One of the things with the pre-apprentice, it allows Connecticut technical high school students to be able to continue with their work-based learning, which I think has been overlooked here, as well as, you know, veterans, you know, looking to get in here as far as things like that on the work-based learning.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): Thank you and I know that it seems that our vo-tech schools have waiting lists. More and more young people are wanting to go to those schools than just their regular comprehensive high school and, you know, it’s shameful if we have, in my opinion, if we have people who are willing to hire these folks to let them begin their career in a certain field that we’re not doing so just arbitrarily because of a statute that’s in the way, so thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Other questions or comments? Representative Cheeseman, please.

REP. CHEESEMAN (37TH): And I just want to return to that issue of on-line learning. I’m looking at lines 47 through 50, nothing in this section shall be construed to apply to education requirements that include hands-on or clinical training site visits or other experiential learning opportunities. Wouldn’t that address your concern that you might be able to do the technical piece on-line, but all the other requirements would have to be met, particularly with regard to that hands-on clinical training, those issues you seem to feel wouldn’t be addressed with on-line training?
RICH BIRD: Yes, currently the state of Connecticut does have one on-line program in the apprenticeship program. It is not a full or complete program, which leaves many of these students scrambling in their final year to complete their 720 hours of education based on this. You know, again, we talk from a safety standpoint, not just from the actual physical electrical worker or fields trades worker, but for the apprentice and consumers as well. That hands-on portion of it, the instructor-led is a very critical piece to the training of the future --

REP. CHEESEMAN (37TH): I’m not arguing with you on that. It just seems to me the language of this states that you have to fulfill all those requirements. This does not preclude them. You could do that piece whether it’s, you know, exam, whatever, on-line, but all the other requirements would still have to be met, so you know, we could go on, obviously, we have a differing -- but thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Representative Ackert.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for being here. So I’m going to put your other hat on. You mentioned, I think, when they introduced you, Shea’s Electrical and one of your jobs is co-owner, how is the, in terms of your business right now, I know we’ve asked some others, but in terms of your business, are you in need, if you were able to have, are you full of your apprentices or do you have any open slots or if you did have open slots, would they be filled?

RICH BIRD: I -- Yes, to answer your question. I apologize, I’m a little nervous at, you know, testifying here for the first time, but to answer
your question, Representative Ackert, yes. You know, we could hire apprentices if there was a change to the ratio. We face the same challenges as spoken earlier today in regards to the aging workforce. We have three individuals right now that are over the age of 55 and, you know, it takes four to six years to train that apprentice to be a skilled electrical worker, to get him ready for that electrical journeyperson’s position, and I think, you know, by being able to help ease the ratio, I think this senate -- like I said, the senate bill is a step in the right direction, but I think we also have to look at additional ways to fill the positions that are going to be vacated by our aging workforce.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): And Senator Witkos brought up a great point that there is a waiting list to get into our tech schools. I mean, one of the things that are great tech schools do is allow an individual to get the training and some time against their practical hours also during their high school as compared to some of the private sector businesses out there, and I don’t want to bring up names, but in that $27,000 to $30,000 dollars year for technical training to get what they can get in high school during their regular education and so those are the ones that are calling -- the people that got the training coming out of high school, are you getting the same calls for people that are coming out of the tech schools to come to work at your company?

RICH BIRD: Yes, we do get a lot of the tech -- the Connecticut’s technical high school students that call looking for employment. Unfortunately due to, you know, we’re beaten it up very, very well, but to
find the open position in the basic -- or in the current model that we have for ratio, it’s hard.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): Thank you and I have one last. You may not know the answer to this, I take it you're a merit shop?

RICH BIRD: That is correct.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): Okay, so we’ve heard a lot of the merit shops looking for it, and do you know, and you may not know this, but in terms of the union, the union shops, in terms of their -- how are they -- I know we heard the one was an 18 to 2 that they have on board, what about the electrical? Do you know what the electrical might have for union apprentices? You’re in training, I don’t know if you have that, it might be wrong to even ask that.

RICH BIRD: No, I mean, I think it’s a good question. I know Senator Kissel had asked that earlier in his statement. The numbers of registered apprentices on the union side represents about 12 percent of the registered apprentices with the merit shop holding about 88 percent of the apprentice.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): Is that the overall state?

RICH BIRD: That is overall in the state of Connecticut based on the electrical.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): Okay. Yeah, I was going to ask about HVAC, but you're an electrician, but thank you. Thank you for your time and Mr. Chairman, thank you.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Thank you. Other questions or comments? Thank you very much. Good job for your first time, there.
RICH BIRD: Thank you.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Now you're a veteran. Speaking of veterans, the incomparable Cameron Champlain is next.

CAMERON CHAMPLAIN: Good afternoon, Senator Maroney, Representative D’Agostino, esteemed members of this committee. My name is Cameron Champlin. I represent Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 777 from Meriden, Connecticut. We represent about 3,500 members. I’ve been involved in the construction -- oops, wrong one, I’m sorry. Anyway, the other part is true, I do represent Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 777, comprised of approximately 3,500 members. I’ve also been a member of the Heating, Cooling, and Piping Licensing Board since 1988. This testimony is in opposition to Senate Bill 13 as written.

In Section 3(b) of the bill, it would allow an apprenticeship sponsored to hire either an apprentice in his last year of apprenticeship or a pre-apprentice in addition to the established hiring ratio. We did not agree with that concept completely, but we are willing to discuss something similar. Section 4 would allow issuance of licenses and continuing related education to be completed via the internet. We don’t agree with that concept since instead of the applicant, it could be somebody else on the other end of that computer while completing the required information. Section 8 describes how a person who holds a license in another state but has not completed an apprenticeship in this state can apply for a similar license here. There is already a procedure in place for such an applicant to apply to be approved for an
examination or be informed what further instruction they need to be approved for an examination.

Because of the unique differences in building codes for each state, we ask that you exclude the building trades occupation and licensing from this bill and I would be glad to answer any questions.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): I don’t know if you have any sort of counterpoints or reactions you wanted to pass along?

CAMERON CHAMPLIN: As you know, I’m also the co-chair of the Apprentice Ratio Committee, which is through this committee, through the General Law Committee, and that’s been in effect for about ten years. Yes, we do have difference in opinions and I do respect the people on the other side of the aisle. I mean, we have our discussions and we don’t agree, but we’re all looking to -- we’re all looking to do the best for the industry, in my opinion. What I’m looking at is if a young person today is going to get into this trade, he -- or any trade, he’s not looking for a job, he’s looking for a career and in order to ensure that he’s going to have a career, if you want to have more apprentices, when they actually graduate and become journeypersons, are you going to have that workload to keep them working or are we doing a disservice to them by putting so many on that now, I don’t know how many contractors double their workload in four years or eight years. I would assume not many, but potentially they -- if we went to higher ratios, they could double their workforce. If we went to one-to-one, it would be in four years potentially, and I know everybody wouldn’t graduate, but potentially they could.
So say in every eight years they double their workforce, are they going to double their workload in eight years? I’m looking out down the road and I understand that supposedly we’re going to have a lot of work, I’ve heard that for many, many years, but I’ve never seen us run out of people. I know right now, as you heard earlier from our apprentice coordinator, Vinnie Valente, we have people that are out of work. We have apprentices that are out of work, so there has to be some correlation between the people that are in the apprentice program and the actual work they're going to have when they become journeypersons.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Questions? Representative Ackert.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): Thank you. Thank you for being here and you're so professional. You’ve got multiple things to speak on.

CAMERON CHAMPLIN: I wasn't too professional when I got up here with the wrong paper.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): That’s okay, that’s okay. So you've been doing this a long time?

CAMERON CHAMPLIN: Yes, I have. I’ve been in the building trades for like 56 years.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): Has the state had a one-to-one ratio in the time that you’ve been in the trades?

CAMERON CHAMPLIN: When I first started in the trade, it was a one-to-one ratio and it was after that we formed this committee that it went to two-to-two and then it went three-to-three and at that time, let me see, at that time when it first got started, Senator Colapietro was the one that started
this because every year there’d be bills coming up, we’d be fighting with each other, and it wasn’t a good scenario. We used to be really bickering back and forth, but at that time, let’s see, Leah Campo was the president of or CEO, whatever they call it, of ABC and because I was up here representing my local, he said look, I want you to pick three people or four people and I want Leah to pick four people and we’ll form this committee and when we started, the idea was we went from one-to-one to two-to-two to three to help those small contractors as they're trying to get off the ground and I know that some of the contractors don’t like the idea of asking for ratio relief, but I’ve heard 60/40.

Now, I don’t know if that is a true figure and I’m not saying anybody is wrong, but it depends on how you look at it. If, from what I’ve been told by people from the DOL, that they probably give ratio relief to 90 percent, but they may not -- if somebody asks for ten apprentices, they might give them six. In my opinion, that’s not a denial, that’s a partial -- that’s a partial give, so I don’t know where them figures come from and I’m not going to argue it. I could probably get those figures, but if somebody in this committee, Representative D’Agostino, wanted to get it, I’m sure it would be very easy for you to do. And I’m sorry.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): Right away you have a wealth of information and we appreciate that, but the answer I remember you saying was you were a one-to-one ratio at a time when we were busy.

CAMERON CHAMPLIN: No, no, no, when I say one-to-one -- When I started, it was five to one. I’m sorry, I
misunderstood you. I thought you meant in the beginning it was one journeyman to one apprentice for the first one and then it was five to one and it got cut down to three to one eventually, but when I first started in the trade, it was five journeymen to one apprentice.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): Then you must have been --

CAMERON CHAMPLIN: I’m old, I’m old.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): -- before me.

CAMERON CHAMPLIN: I started in 1965.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): I will continue in the pack with that. The Chair has been very patient with me and I thank him very much, so.

CAMERON CHAMPLIN: You know what, you can’t hurt my feelings.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): Yeah, not, but I’ve asked enough on this issue, but I want to thank you for your time for being here and we’ll keep the dialog going, I believe, so thank you Mr. Chairman.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): That’s okay. James.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): Thank you very much for being here today. Just a few quick questions. So, you know, talking about, I guess, in the reciprocity, what would be the difference of the training for a plumber, say, in Alabama versus a plumber here?

CAMERON CHAMPLIN: Well, the difference would be in Alabama, you don’t have to worry about a frost line, you don’t have to worry about having, say, pipes in an attic or any open space where, you know, like in an attic here, you know, you’ve got to have --
you’ve got to have it insulated so that nothing will freeze. Frost line, if you’re putting a water line in, you’ve got to be below the frost line, so there are a lot of different codes, but also the criteria from one state to another changes, but as I -- somebody else stated, I know on my board, I sit on the heating and cooling board, I’ve been there since 1988, and when somebody comes in looking for a license from another state, we send them -- if we know they're not like -- I will say this, Massachusetts has a pipefitter’s license that is comparable to our S4 license. If somebody comes in from Massachusetts with a pipefitter’s license, it’s the same criteria as our S4, they can sit for the test.

If somebody comes in from another state, we have to have it evaluated to see where they line up with what we have and if they don’t have the proper qualifications for the license that they’re looking to get, we will tell them you might not qualify for this, but we can give you a lower license or you go over to the Labor Department and they will tell you you're missing two classes, four classes, or whatever it is. So we do accommodate people and that is not a long process. We can do that -- If somebody comes looking for a license here and they came to the board, within two to three weeks they could have a license here. And for military people, they -- we have the testing people, that we have a PSI is the name of the company, they have offices all over the United States, so if somebody is going to get transferred to Connecticut and they know that, they could find out by getting the criteria and sending it to the Labor Department here what they’re missing to upgrade or what license they
could go for and they could take that test anywhere with PSI, any one of their offices.

SENATOR MARONEY (14TH): Thank you.

CAMERON CHAMPLIN: You’re welcome, thank you.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): Cam.

CAMERON CHAMPLIN: Hi, Senator.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): I’ve been on this committee a long time, as you know.

CAMERON CHAMPLIN: Yes, it’s always been pleasant.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): Absolutely. The working group didn’t come together very easily. As you know, when it was formed, you didn’t even meet in the first year. It wasn’t until this committee basically threatened legislation again to say we’re going to push something through unless the two sides get together and meet and then you started meeting.

CAMERON CHAMPLIN: Right, but one thing we did know, when Lela and I first started, we met at DOL a couple of times. When Jack Ferraro was over there as the apprentice, whatever he is, for the state of Connecticut, when he was here we did meet and then yes, we kind of got lax and that’s when you kind of said listen, get going or hit the road.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): And that was probably how many years ago? Six, seven, eight?

CAMERON CHAMPLIN: I would say like seven years ago because I believe, if my memory serves me right, it was 2009 that we formed the committee.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): So it was the year before that, probably.
CAMERON CHAMPLIN: And then 2010, we put legislation in that went from the one-to-one for the first one and then it went two-to-two and then later we went three-to-three, so.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): So my point on that whole thing is this issue has not changed. You, in your argument, had said you're concerned about the future and that there’s basically going to be enough work for everybody. Well, we’ve already just now established over a ten-year period basically when we’ve been talking about enforcing the creation of the working group that there’s a need. We’re hearing from folks and you heard about them -- from them today firsthand, I took a little bit of offense to you saying well, the other side, I mean, there is no other side. You guys are all licensed contractors. The only side is union versus nonunion.

CAMERON CHAMPLIN: I should have rephrased that and said the open shop and I apologize if I -- I didn’t mean anything detrimental to that. I talk with -- Joe Defusco and I talk all the time. I mean, we’re not -- we’re not enemies by any means.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): Sure, I mean, we’re just -- you just -- you want to reach a common goal is you want to keep people employed and make sure there is a pipeline for new people to come in and make sure they’re qualified to go when people retire. We’ve heard on this committee that the average plumber is 59 years old in the state of Connecticut, the average, I forget what they just said, was in their 50s, so we do have an aging workforce, but we have a population that wants to get in, but they just -- we just are creating barriers to let them come in. I
don’t think it’s fair for you to comment on the 60/40 ratio without you having your facts. I know you said we could probably get them.

CAMERON CHAMPLIN: I qualified by saying I don’t know that. I’m just -- I don’t know how they --

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): You stated that you don’t know where they got their information from, so I don’t think that was fair.

CAMERON CHAMPLIN: No, no, no, I’m sorry, Senator.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): I have a question coming up for you. I just want to say that I didn’t think it was fair to comment, raising doubt, that those figures are correct and I actually asked for information on the breakdown from them, so I’d be more than happy to share that with anybody wants to see it, but I do have a question for you. Why are you against Section 3(b) specifically of the bill when at the very end of the sentence in lines 39 through 40 it says irrespective of what you hire, it’s still going to be a one-to-one ratio when you're working out in the field? Why would the Local 777, I think that’s who you're representing tonight to testify, is against that?

CAMERON CHAMPLIN: I didn’t say -- I said we would not agree with that as written, but yes, we would, you know, we think it’s something to discuss as I do believe the fourth year apprentice would be the way to go. I don’t think hiring a pre-apprentice is the way to go, you know, you’ve got a fourth year apprentice and it won’t count towards your ratio, I think that’s fair.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): But just comment on -- Because I was very intrigued, and then
Representative Ackert put it in better light, that kids that are in a work, or somebody did, maybe it was -- in a program at school, in a vo-tech school where they're in school half the day, then they go the other half of the day to start learning the trade that they’re going to school for now, why would -- is that what you're talking, you don’t approve of that or don’t like that?

CAMERON CHAMPLIN: Well, no, that -- they have a special -- I know they must get -- I don’t know how they do it because they’re under 18 and they work on a job site and I know under 18, they’re not supposed to be on the job site. They must get a waiver because they are from a trade school, so yes, they go out and work, you know, at that particular project, but I believe most of that, and as far as I know, none of it is on anything that would be commercial. It would be all residential. I’m talking about the kids from the trade schools that would work on it, it’s just residential while they are in high school.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): Are you saying that for a fact or?

CAMERON CHAMPLIN: No, I would say I’m 90 percent sure, but I could be wrong. I don’t think they work on any commercial or industrial projects.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): I’d ask if you could follow up with that, please, the Department of Labor for persons under the age of 18 if they're doing anything outside of the residential field. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Thank you, Senator. Any questions or comments? All right. Thank you.
CAMERON CHAMPLIN: Just one thing, I just want to clarify one thing. When I did ask about the -- And I know, Senator, I didn’t mean to offend anybody here, it’s just that I said I don’t know how -- I was told that it was like 90 percent and I know Larry is here, he sits on the committee, he might know better, but if they’re giving partial -- like you're asking for ten you get six, that’s partial, but I wouldn’t say a denial, but somebody else might say well, no, that’s a denial because I asked for ten. That was all I was getting at, not asking that somebody was misleading you with numbers or just, you know, how you get to the numbers.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): That’s like a budget discussion we have here in the state where they say I asked for eight and I only got four, so I cut 4 percent. So --

CAMERON CHAMPLIN: Thank you. Thank you for your time.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Great, thank you. Perfect, okay. You know, with the benefit of the discussion that we’ve had, particularly with the last few speakers and obviously at the beginning, I would encourage the last few speakers on 13 to keep their comments brief, maybe even ask if there are questions from the Committee. I don’t know if the Committee needs to retread a lot of the same ground. They’ll ask questions if they have specific ones. We’ve got your testimony. I don’t want to cut anybody off, but we’ve got testimony and I’d like to get -- I’d like to get our Committee members out of here by 5:00, so Allie French.

ALLIE FRENCH: All right. Good afternoon, members of the General Law Committee. As you requested, I
will keep it brief. One thing that I do want to share is I’ve been in my role as the executive director for the past year, Independent Electrical Contractors. Prior to that, I have been heavily involved in the apprenticeship program. The first year that I did start, we graduated seven electrical apprentices. This year, we are scheduled to graduate 15, which is doubled, and next year we’re doubling that at 32, so the interest is definitely there in the trades and the students are looking for work.

What I do want to read as a testimony from one of our first year students, it’s just a brief excerpt; “I have been contacting many contractors and companies for many months now and the only answer I’ve been getting is it would be nice if we could hire you, but we can’t because we’re looking for licenses journeypersons. Another answer I’ve been receiving is the state ratio will not allow us to hire you at this moment because we don’t have enough licensed men for one more apprentice. I am not the only student that has been given these answers or is having a hard time getting into the field. For a trade that is hungry for men and women who are willing to work and learn, it shouldn’t be this hard to find work.”

I do have additional testimony from unemployed students at this time, which I’d be more than willing to submit and I would appreciate any questions or comments.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Yes, that’s helpful. If you could give it to our clerk if there’s no questions, but questions or comments from Committee
members? Yes, please pass that along to our clerk. That would be great. Thank you.

ALLIE FRENCH: Thank you for your time.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Thank you. Joe Fontana.

JOE FONTANA: Good afternoon, Senator Maroney, Senator Witkos, Representative D’Agostino, and Representative Cheeseman and all the members of the General Law Committee. I am Joe Fontana. I am director of estimating at PJ Lodola and Sons Electrical Contractors located in Windsor Locks and I’m also the president of the Independent Electrical Contractors of New England, located in Rocky Hill. I today also am testifying on the workforce development and the hiring ratio listed in Senate Bill 13. I just want to say that I firmly believe the future of all electrical contractors and mechanical trades is depending on developing our workforce through the apprenticeship and training program.

My main concern is the current hiring ratio for the electrical apprentice. This has been stated today. Our goal really should be to provide jobs in the trade such as ours and not deter the youth to find other careers or to seek employment in other states and I’m going to kind of elaborate on it a little more because like I think Representative Ackert said earlier, he asked earlier about people coming in. We have an abundant amount of people coming in from the trade schools, from the institutional schools, the institutions like the day schools we’ll call it and we’re handtied. Okay. My company, our company, PJ Lodola Electrical Contractors, I’ve been with them since 1983. We’ve always prided ourselves
in developing our workforce from apprenticeship to our current leaders.

I’m very proud to say that I was able to apprentice with this company, receive my electrical license, and now I hold my current position of director of estimating and unfortunately today, the current hiring ratio restricts the development for the next generation of our leaders in our company, as well as the industry. The inability to hire apprentices, to train apprentices, and have apprentices work along with our qualified licensed personnel restricts the development of our workforce. Our company has had many occasions, as I mentioned earlier, we had an abundant amount of apprentices, potential apprentices, applying through our company positions and due to the hiring ratio, we were unable to employ many of these applicants. If the current hiring ratio is amended, PJ Lodola and Sons and I’m sure other contractors will be able to employ, train, and promote additional apprentices.

On the subject of ratio relief, our company participates in it. We apply for ratio relief. We feel it has not produced the results compared to what a more productive hiring ratio could do for us. We, and many other contractors, feel the ratio relief forms are very subjective and are very time-consuming. We feel ratio relief is an inefficient solution to the much larger problem of what the hiring ratio can do for us. And in the end, our goal is just to increase the workforce in our trades. In conclusion, I’d like to thank everybody for their time and allowing me to provide this testimony.
REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Questions? Representative Ackert, please.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): So just one question I want to ask, you're a pretty good-sized company, I believe, yeah, so are there jobs that you just aren’t estimating because you don’t have the workforce?

JOE FONTANA: Yeah. I’m going to say yes. I had to go in the office this morning. I planned to take today off, I had to go in. We have jobs that are going in today. The project managers are in and saying can we do it and if we could hire the people, the journeymen aren’t there to hire, so they don’t grow on a tree, so either we have to take them from other people or they're not there in order to comply with this ratio. So that said, if we were able to bring more apprentices in, train them, and I’ll say this much, from the president, vice-president, myself, our whole management team started with this company as an apprentice. I heard someone talk about pre-apprentices and it made me think of something, our project manager in charge of all our construction came to us as a pre-apprentice. We pride ourselves, and I wrote this down, we pride ourselves in developing that. We have high retention rate and again, we have people knocking on the door. I saw an apprentice applying this morning. I’ve got a feeling that maybe not such good news for him. Our fear is that -- hopefully they will find work with one of my colleagues and if they can’t find work with one of my colleagues, they might find something else to do or they mind find something else in another state that might take them and allow them to use the tools and get the education and that would be the worst thing.
REP. ACKERT (8TH): And I think you hit the nail on the head that there’s not the workforce to sustain the work that’s out there and so we need the bill to train under us. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Senator.

SEN. LEONE (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So as I’ve been trying to follow some of the testimony, I guess has anyone come up with a recommendation as to what the ratio should be so that your apprentices could then get into the pipeline? It seems like the ratio is a sticking point.

JOE FONTANA: It is a sticking point.

SEN. LEONE (27TH): But I’m also hearing that there’s not a consensus as to what that number should be, so I guess just from your perspective, what would you recommend?

JOE FONTANA: I would recommend the one-to-one as well. From my perspective in my 37 years doing this and my company’s perspective, we have a responsibility, people are bringing up safety, people are bringing up training, we have a responsibility when we put people on a job site to provide the safety, the toolbox, to provide the -- we pay for the equipment, arc flash suits, things -- whatever is needed. We spend a lot of money on safety, we train, OSHA 10, OSHA 30. Most of our apprentices and journeymen have gone through the IC program and we continue to educate them. We have a responsibility. It just seems unfair that you have to -- you have a three to one hiring ratio and then if a company has 40 people, 30 journeymen, 10 apprentices, they’ve got to hire three more
journeymen wherever they're coming from in order to get an apprentice, but on the job site, it’s always one-to-one.

SEN. LEONE (27TH): Okay. Thank you. You know, as we try to figure out what we need to do, it seems we have to figure out where that balance is and I’m not hearing consensus yet and that’s what we’re trying to figure out and that is going to be important for us to know, you know, is the workforce out there, is it the work demand out there, all those fun things, so to the extent we get some of that data, that would be helpful for us in contemplating what that decision needs to be. Thank you.

JOE FONTANA: Thank you.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Other questions or comments? Terrific, thank you.

JOE FONTANA: Thank you for your time. Thank you.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Peter Alfieri.

PETER ALFIERI: Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and Committee. I appreciate the time. My name is Peter Alfieri. I’m a business agent for Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 777. In the state of Connecticut, currently we have approximately 2,000 licensed journeymen and journeywomen working and 220 apprentices. Currently we have 350 journeymen, journeywomen, mechanics on the out of work list, they’re out of work right now looking for work, and approximately 80 apprentices, give or take a few, that are out of work currently right now. We also offer the VIP Program and the Helmets to Hardhat program for our veterans returning from the war.
Section 3, Subsection b, we support number 1. This allows a fifth year apprentice to come on the job. He’s been in the business for five years. He should know his way around. He shouldn’t have to be watched by the journeymen, so he would be an asset to the company and to himself by getting the hours and able to graduate from the apprenticeship. We do not support number 2. Our Local has first year apprentices that are pre-apprentices. Technically they are. They’ve never worked on a construction job and they are pre-apprentices, so that’s what we use for our pre-apprentices to our contractors. And as pre-apprentices learn the trade, they’ll be doing the work of the second, third, and fourth year and never getting registered and never getting credited time and never going to get a license. They’re just going to be forgotten about and then the registered apprentices will never get a chance to go to work because they won’t need them because they’ve got these pre-apprentices that have been pre-apprentices for three, four, five, six years and they’ll never be able to go to work, so it kind of blocks them.

Section 4, we do not -- we do not support any on-line schooling and the reason is anybody can sit and take that test for you on-line, an uncle, a brother, a father, relative, hey Dad, take this test for me. I’ve got to get a plumbing license in Connecticut, take that test. We don’t see that working, okay, we don’t see that’s something viable. Section 8, Subsection a, 1 through 4, we strongly oppose to this complete section, giving a license to anybody that has a license in any other state without consideration of the amount of schooling and hours and subject matter is completely irresponsible and I’ll just tell you a little -- a quick, quick story.
I sit on the plumbing board in the state. We had a
guy come in --

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): I think -- I’ve got three
minutes for the public. I don’t want to cut you
off. I think members might have questions for you,
though.

PETER ALFIERI: Okay, all right, good enough.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Senator.

SEN. LEONE (27TH): Yeah, just to keep the
conversation going, my previous question, do you
have any comments on the ratio? What would be your
recommendations if we were to change the ratio to
journeymen?

PETER ALFIERI: One-to-one. What do they want, two
to one? Two apprentices to one journeyman? That’s
going to be -- That’s a rough day on the journeyman
to watch two apprentices. They’ve already got one-
to-one, that’s my take on it. I don’t get it. If
they ask for two-to-one, what else can they ask for?

SEN. LEONE (27TH): No, I don’t think they’re
asking. I’m just asking for your --

PETER ALFIERI: My opinion? They should leave it
alone.

SEN. LEONE (27TH): -- what your opinion would be?

PETER ALFIERI: My opinion would be to leave alone,
to one-to-one.

SEN. LEONE (27TH): Okay. Thank you.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): Peter, I agree with your
concerns about the pre-apprentice, somebody
stretching it out and that’s why I brought up some
comments earlier about putting a time certain, otherwise you can’t do that anymore, you can’t claim that status. If there was something like that in the legislation, whether it was the fourth year, the 75 percent, or the pre-apprentice, how would you feel about that?

PETER ALFIERI: We’d consider it.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): Okay. And you're saying the one-to-one, just to clarify, it’s one-to-one only up to the first three and after that, the ratio changes?

PETER ALFIERI: After that.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): So what do you feel about five to five to six to six, always one-to-one?

PETER ALFIERI: We’re always willing to negotiate. We’re always willing to sit and talk to the Committee. We’re always willing to do that. Personally, I have -- I think one-to-one is fine with first year, second year apprentices. They need to have that journeyman with them at all times. They don’t know enough. I remember back when I was working in the field grabbing kids that would close to the edge of a building on a roof and say don’t go there, don’t you understand? Oh, I want to see what -- I want to see the view. Well, that’s not what we’re here for, so I mean, you need to -- you need to protect these kids.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): You changed the -- You changed the question. Under the current law, if you have four apprentices, you're required to have six journeymen. The request is to say a change to be four apprentices, four journeymen, five apprentices,
five journeymen, and I’m asking you what your comment is on that?

PETER ALFIERI: I would say leave it alone right now.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): And why is that?

PETER ALFIERI: Because I haven’t had time to think about it.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): Well, you were okay with the one-to-one on the one, two, and three, so --

PETER ALFIERI: Correct.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): -- if it’s still one person with one person, I don’t understand, what is there to think about? Because we can’t ask you to come back later, I mean, we’re in a public hearing today to talk about how we’re going to form this bill.

PETER ALFIERI: Right.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): I think just you’re really the last -- I think you might be the last speaker on this. I guess I’ll just bookend all the thoughts on this by piggybacking on that. You know, you have two bipartisan senators asking the same question. That should tell everybody working on this that this is now a bipartisan issue. It didn’t used to be, but I will tell you as the chair of this committee that it is now -- I’m getting bipartisan pressure to deal with this issue, so this committee will deal with this issue eventually, but the great thing is, right now this year, you've got a vehicle to do that. The Governor’s Office has stepped in and said
let’s bring everybody together, let’s figure it out. They put something out there and my understanding is they’re meeting with everybody, so I would encourage all the constituent groups to do that, think about it, and yeah, I appreciate that. You want to digest it, think about everything you heard, think about what maybe makes sense, but I will tell you, the ratio issue comes here every year and we deal with it and sometimes we don’t, but this year, it was bipartisan and you just had two very well, you know, two senators who I respect greatly who really thought about this issue asking the same question, which really should tell you something.

So I really would encourage all the constituent groups sit down with Johnny Dach, he’s right there, let’s hammer this out. We’ll end where we started on this bill, right. Come up with something everybody can agree with, try to come up with something everybody can agree with and we appreciate you may get close and then not quite get here and then we’ve got to make a decision, but this is going to deal with the ratio issue, I know there’s other issues in this bill, but if the ratio issue isn’t taken care in this bill, I guarantee you we will do it next year and it may not -- and it’s probably going to be a decision that we decide that maybe you won’t like, so this is a really great chance with this vehicle out there and because the conversations have already started to deal with this issue and absolutely want you to think about it, you know, talk to the rest of the trades, have they been thinking about it, and see what you can come up with. So I will leave it there and thank you for your testimony today. Appreciate it. Ernestine Holladay -- Holloway, excuse me.
ERNESTINE HOLLOWAY: Hi. My name is Reverend Ernestine Holloway. Good afternoon, good evening, one of the two. I was listening to you. I was a pre-apprentice, but not in electrical, in politics, and -- which is interesting because it’s the same premises. Somebody trained me [inaudible *4:02:14.7]. I was a junior. I wasn’t able to sit in the lobby by myself because I wasn’t old enough until I got 16, so when I got 16, they created a board just for 16-year-olds to sit in the lobby and do what the adults do. Somebody walked us through the journey. We didn’t do it by ourselves because we was young, we was crazy, so it’s the same premises. One-to-one normally works because guess what, we didn’t listen, we were hard-headed. We did everything they said that we shouldn’t have done and got them in trouble. So one-to-one usually works, even with people that can’t learn in groups, so some people learn better just by watching one person.

When it’s two to three persons, they’re distracted and can’t keep their mind on what’s going on, so if you ask me, your ratio is always good one-to-one and that’s how I got discovered in politics. David Dinkins said to me answer that question again and I said -- he said I like you. I said I don’t like you. He said you’re going to be my apprentice and I followed him and that’s how I got to where I was, so apprentice is a good thing and one-on-one usually works for people that can’t keep their attention when too many people are around. Now I want to talk about this thing you’ve got here. By the way, I have 29 years in recovery. That means I started very young. I’m 52. And I want to talk about 254. I was a big girl when I was younger, so that means when I was 15 I looked like I was 20 and that means
I can get ID, so we’re going to apply this to this situation you got right here concerning alcohol.

So I go into a club because you know, at 18 you can go to a club these days. You look at me, you can’t tell that I’m 16, 15, I don’t want to get anybody else in trouble, because they’re all in trouble, and I got an ID. You don’t know where I got it from, but I just go there and I’m going -- he’s going to card me and I’m going to get alcohol. Who is to say that somebody else isn’t going to buy it for me, so to have it to the point that you can just card and you only get 32 ounces of this or 10 ounces of this, you're not watching it because it’s self-pour. So who’s going to keep an eye of this if you’ve got a club or you got a store that’s full of people. And the reason I’m saying it is me and my daughter was at the liquor store the other day. I was buying some non-alcoholic beverages and she began to show me all the different things that were new and I was like, oh, that looks like cartoons. She was like yeah, mama, but it tastes good. When did you taste it? Oh, I was over 21. I just looked at her and laughed because I remember I was 15 and I was tasting, so I didn’t say anything.

And it was a self-pour tasting. You know, you pay and you just taste. So with this bill, I promise you, little girls that look like me that don’t look like they're 21 and can get IDs are going to get access to alcohol. I’m not saying that they’re not going to drink anyway, but I’m saying let’s not make it where they can get it easily. Let’s make them be carded, let’s make them say to the store if they get a hold of this, you are responsible and I don’t see this in this bill. We’ve got enough issues.
REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Thank you very much. Appreciate that testimony and the precursory testimony, too. Any questions from Committee members? Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

BRIAN ESSENTER: Good evening, everybody. I’m here to testify on behalf of House Bill 5295, AN ACT CONCERNING THE REVISIONS OF THE MEDICAL MARIJUANA STATUTES. I’d like to thank Representative D’Agostino, Senator Maroney, and members of the General Law Committee for listening to our testimony today. I am a pharmacist and I’m a dispensary manager at Infinity Health and Wellness Medical Marijuana Dispensary in New Haven, Connecticut. I’ve been working in the medical marijuana program for five years and I’ve submitted testimonies on quite a few of these different bills as well. You’re going to hear probably a little bit different from myself today as you may have heard from some of the others just because there are some differences in this bill that you haven’t seen in the others, but overall I think it’s spectacular.

You know, to start with, Section 1, line 17, any person with a valid registration certification found to be in possession of marijuana that did not originate from the selected dispensary, I think that’s a concern. We don’t really have a way of being able to figure out where the product originated from. That to me would mean that it would need to be kept in its original container, which is not an ideal container to store your medication. We talk about prescription medications not being stored in your bathroom or in, you know, those kind of situations, so I just think that
leaves a lot of ambiguity and possibility for patients storing their medication improperly.

Section 2, allowing patients to choose a dispensary that has more than one location to transfer between those dispensaries. I think you've heard from most of us today that just transferring between all of the dispensaries would be ideal there. I know some of them aren’t even able yet to transmit that information on a real time basis to the PMP system. I know our system does allow for that. My issue with this more than anything is just the concern of the patient's allotment. They don’t roll over on an exact monthly basis. They start on the day one of their purchase, so looking at a PMP profile, I don’t know when that patient's allotment resets in order to be able to ascertain how much they've purchased within that monthly period. So there would have to be some language to adjust that to -- Even if it was from the first of the month to the end of the month, there would only be one month out of their entire year that that would be any kind of an issue that they're obtaining more than typical there.

In Section 2, part A, such registration shall be effective from the date that the DCP certifies the registration. That’s a spectacular move. That’s been an issue in the past. Patients were losing a month or more on their registration as well, so that really just helps the patients get the full value out of their fees and speaking of fees, Section 3, eliminating all fees. This has been something that we have been begging for for years. This is only a positive thing for the program for the patients, allowing access. You know, we are in New Haven, so you know, we have a demographic of patients that finances are a big issue in obtaining access to the
medical program. The products that they’re purchasing are, you know, off the street with no testing or anything like that and between the doctor’s fee of $100 dollars up to, you know, $400 dollars and $100 dollar registration fee before they even get in to make that purchase.

Two things really quickly, I’m sorry, adding chronic pain to the calculator, thank you so much for pushing that forward. We’ve been begging for that for a long time, too. And the other question that just needs to be clarified is Section 6 at the very end, anything of value from the producers to the dispensaries, we don’t know if that means swag type of giveaway materials, if that means discounts toward product, just something to clarify that for marketing purposes if nothing else and then just two quick points --

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Let me stop you. So on -- What is -- What happens now? Are the producers giving -- What’s the --

BRIAN ESSENER: Yeah, we get T-shirts, we’ll get lighters, we’ll get, you know, keychains, stuff like that. They had p-cutter giveaways, just things like that, you know, so patients can promote their company as well. It’s just a marketing thing more than anything so that patients can get to know their brand.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): And it’s given to you to give to patients or given directly to patients?

BRIAN ESSENER: No, it’s given to us to give to the patients because the producers can’t give anything directly to the patients so they supply the
dispensaries with those marketing materials and then we in turn give them away to the patients.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): And that’s like a keychain that says what?

BRIAN ESSENETER: Keychains that just say, you know, whatever the producer’s name is and that they’re a medical marijuana producer and that’s pretty much it. It’s just marketing, but again, just for clarification purposes so we know what is and isn’t acceptable.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Okay. All right. And what was the other -- You had another quick two points?

BRIAN ESSENETER: Yeah, I was speaking earlier regarding caregivers. Two caregivers would be an absolutely essential thing for a lot of patients who are pediatric patients. They may have divorced parents. They may have, you know, the need of a grandmother or, you know, somebody else who is taking care of them on a regular basis that should have the legal ability to possess and dispense that medication to these pediatric patients and other patients that have multiple caregivers because today, people are usually working 40-hour a week jobs and being caregivers as well.

And the last thing, just really quick --

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): I’m sorry, on the caregiver thing, is that -- in that in statute or reg?

BRIAN ESSENETER: That’s in the statute, the original statutes, yeah. The other thing, Representative Candelora had mentioned about research in the state. I did just want to mention that we are participating with CT Pharma study that they’re doing with Yale
and we have been already seeing our first couple of patient come in through that study as well, so that’s something that is progressing forward and we couldn’t be happier and prouder of participating with.


JOE FAZZINO: Good afternoon and thank you very much for letting me speak with you today. It’s my first time ever doing this. Apparently I got in the wrong line this morning and my testimony went to some other committee.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): We’ll make sure it gets here.

JOE FAZZINO: It is on-line. So I’m here in support of -- First of all, my name is Joe Fazzino. I’m a business agent for the glazers union here in Connecticut. I’ve been a glazer for 38 years. I’ve held the license for 17 years. I’m in support of Senate Bill 250, the act concerning flat glass occupation licensing, and the purpose of this bill is just to define the -- just clarify the definition of pre-glaze and pre-assembled and there was some another gentleman who spoke earlier who came up with some pretty colorful descriptions of what pre-glaze and pre-assembled is, but in the glazing world, it’s very simple. Pre-glaze is exactly that. A glaze system is -- To glaze is to take a piece of glass and glaze it into a frame or a panel or something, glazing it into a frame. Pre-glazed means it was already glazed into that frame system prior to showing up to the job site, most likely in a factory like your windows in Home Depot or Anderson Windows,
so that’s -- pre-glaze is -- that’s the definition of pre-glaze.

Within the -- Within Section 20-340 of Chapter 393, the exemption for this license reads persons who install pre-glazed or pre-assembled windows or doors in a residential or commercial building. Those windows -- So the other guy was talking about demountable glass wall systems. He said if there’s a seamed edge, they consider that pre-glazed. That’s his own story. I don’t know where he came up with that, but if you go to the Department of Consumer Protection, they're on record stating that that type glass requires a license, so I’m sure where he came up with it or why he says that it’s considered pre-glazed or pre-assembled, but that’s not. That term, it doesn’t even make sense. It’s a raw piece of glass that gets delivered to the job site in a case where they’ve loosely moved out and set and glazed into a glazing system. It’s glazing. The intent of this license was to -- for public safety and back in the day, it wasn’t a demountable wall. It was just interior office partitions, interior glass door front.

Nowadays because of the -- they have in their -- they get tax deductions if they put it in the furniture package, so now it’s furniture. It’s no longer in the glazing package. That particular group starting doing it because they have control of GCs, but that’s a whole other thing, but that’s where we are with this. This stuff, it was always meant to be covered, the glass that has a raw edge is meant to be covered under the license and this here, all it’s doing is defining or clarifying that definition what pre-glaze is to DCP will have an opportunity to go out and defend this license to
enforce it. And we’ve been asked by them to get this done, so that’s where I stand with this and I’d be happy to take any questions you got.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Well done for a first time, well timed, yeah, that was well done. Questions of Mr. Fazzino? Thank you. We’ll make sure -- And just make sure you give a hard copy, too, when you can. I just want to make sure that your testimony does get circulated. Thank you.

JOE FAZZINO: Thank you very much for your time.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Edward Cassidy? Tim. And Senator Witkos isn’t even here.

TIM PHELAN: So thank you. For the record, I’m Tim Phelan, president of the Connecticut Retail Merchants Association. CRMA, as you know, is a statewide trade association representing all different types of retailers, including some of the world's largest retailers in the states, Main Street merchants. I’m here today to testify on House Bill 5296. I’ve submitted written testimony. I just wanted to very briefly, and with the Committee’s indulgence, just give you a little bit of background as to why we come up and testify against this bill every year. So you have to go back to 2003 in a budget compromise bill that was adopted that included language that required retailers to escheat unredeemed portions of gift cards, of gift certificates, excuse me. We opposed that, couldn’t stop it, came back the next legislative section and worked on trying to repeal that.

As part of that process, we came up with an essentially, not to be overly dramatic, a grand bargain between the parties involved and there are
three major parties involved in this particular issue. There’s the state, the Treasurer’s Office, which wanted to require retailers to escheat the unredeemed portion of the gift card. There is the retailer who then at the time with gift certificates was putting on expiration dates and there were consumers that were obviously the users of the gift certificates. At the same time, the retail industry was moving away from gift certificates to gift cards. Those gift cards, when we first started introducing them, had things that were not consumer friendly admittedly. There were things like expiration dates. There were things that were dormancy fees if you didn’t use your card.

So part of the compromise was everybody gave a little bit in the process. We gave in the sense that we said we will not put expiration dates on our gift cards anymore and we will not charge dormancy fees -- right on cue -- and we will not charge dormancy fees on our gift cards anymore. So the state returned, could not unexpectedly come to your store and say, you know, you have these unredeemed gift certificates or gift cards now, you need to escheat back to the state and in return, consumers would never have to worry about a gift card being stuck in your top drawer and not being able to use it because there was an expiration date. That law held for 10, 12 years and it really worked. Everybody won in that regard. It’s very rate that you see a public policy decision made by the legislature that all the parties involve benefit by it.

Until, you know, we then started, in our opinion, all with good intentions, not any, you know, bad intentions on anybody’s part, to begin to chip away
at that and start talking about giving unredeemed small amounts of cash back to consumers. So our concern is there’s no overwhelming evidence that there’s a consumer complaint about this or that retailers are acting, you know, in an unfair manner towards consumers and we would prefer that the legislature stop where they are now and not continue with an increase in the dollar amount back because, quite frankly, we’re not sure where that will end, so that is my testimony. Thank you for your indulgence.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): What have you heard from your association, the folks that you represent, as to how often is it that somebody comes in and requests cash back on a gift card if there actually is a balance remaining? My experience has been, when I was in the restaurant business, that folks overspent the gift card so there was a balance due, not a refund.

TIM PHELAN: Very, very, very rarely do we hear of it. If there’s a demand for consumers to get cash back on gift cards, it’s virtually, you know -- Maybe there are diminishing amounts, you know, that they ask for, but for the most part, customers use their gift cards, to your point, sometimes they overuse them. Again, not to get too much into the weeds on this, but sometimes, you know, for a smaller retailer, it’s a great opportunity for a customer to first walk into their store and hope they come back by using that gift card. A gift card could have features like reloadability. Retailers may want you to, you know, you have a couple bucks left, give you the option to reload the gift card for convenience and for repetitive sales, so you know, those are one of the benefits of a gift card.
SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): Thanks. I won’t delay. I’ll save my comments for JFD for the floor of the Senate.

TIM PHELAN: I will just say, Mr. Chairman, that I understand you have bigger fish to fry, but frankly, we have bigger fish to fry, too, but I would just ask if it’s not broken, don’t fix it. I mean, this is a, in some ways, a problem, you know, searching for a solution.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): It’s more that I’ve got a fish that’s going to fry me if I don’t advance this bill.

TIM PHELAN: That fish has fried me, Representative D’Agostino, and now it’s looking -- but whatever. Thank you.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): And Senator Witkos can deal with that. Thank you very much.

CHRISTINA CAPITAN: Good evening, distinguished members of the General Law Committee, Representative D’Agostino, Senator Maroney, Representative Gibson, Representative Candelaria, Representative Cheeseman, and Senator Witkos. Thank you for having me here. This is a matter regarding H.B. 5295, AN ACT CONCERNING REVISIONS TO THE MEDICAL MARIJUANA PROGRAM. This is a matter of extreme importance to me. I have worked with the medical Cannabis community for about six years now and I’ve been a patient for about seven. I really would like to see this bill advanced as an individual considerably knowledgeable about the medical marijuana program. I spend most of my free time helping patients voluntarily to navigate different issues within the
program and this is a reoccurring issue that they face is trying to come up with that fee.

The state registration fees have been causing unnecessary hardship to those that are most vulnerable in our state for many years. The fact that any amount of money would be a barrier for someone who could potentially benefit from gaining safe, legal access to Cannabis medicine is counterproductive to the mission of the program itself. It is absolutely heartbreaking to encounter an otherwise qualifying patient without the means to complete registration who is in desperate need. I spend many of my days voluntarily helping to find funding and resources for patients in need. I even have used my own funds on several occasions to help supplement the fee when no other options were available to the patient.

I also want to mention regarding this issue that pediatric patients and those who are completely disabled are paying the most to get into the program because they do require a caregiver for an additional $25 dollars. I have submitted my testimony and it’s been a long day, so I’ll let you get through that on your own, but I am available for any questions. Thank you.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): That’s great, thank you. I assume you would support the two-caregiver concept we’ve been talking about today, right?

CHRISTINA CAPITAN: Absolutely.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): That’s helpful. That’s great to get your perspective. We really appreciate it. Questions from Committee members? Senator, please.
SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): I was thinking in my mind when somebody else testified about increasing to two caregivers if it was limited to just the caregivers of a juvenile and maybe a disabled person. What are your thoughts about that?

CHRISTINA CAPITAN: I believe two caregivers for somebody who is fully disabled would be a great asset for them because a lot of people have different caregivers that take care of them throughout the day, like aides and things of that nature, and a lot of these folks don’t have immediate family members who can care for them in that regard, so it would be really helpful for them as well.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): Thank you.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Other questions or comments? Thank you. Terrific. I appreciate it.

CHRISTINA CAPITAN: I appreciate it, too.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Christina was our last registered speaker of the day. Is there anyone else who would like to speak on any bills before the Committee today? Otherwise, she’s a great way to end. Then we will adjourn the General Law Public Hearing and our next meeting is on Tuesday, March 10th, where we hope or expect to JF and JFS our bills out. Thank you.