

Testimony of Richard Bird
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Independent Electrical Contractors of New England
Senate Bill 13
General Law Committee
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Good afternoon, Senator Maroney, Senator Witkos, Representative D'Agostino, Representative Cheeseman and members of the General Law Committee. My name is Richard Bird and I am testifying today on behalf of the Independent Electrical Contractors as Vice President and Senior Instructor. I am also a Subject Matter Expert to review electrical curriculums with the Connecticut Office of Higher Education. I also have been in the electrical industry in the State of Connecticut since 1984, first as an electrical apprentice, then a licensed electrical journeyman, finally a licensed electrical contractor and partner of Shea's Electrical, Inc. I would like to offer the following comments and recommendations concerning Senate Bill 13 for your consideration:

As a senior instructor with the IEC nationally and locally approved Apprenticeship Training Program, I am aware that many of our first-year apprentices have been having an extremely difficult time finding a position as an electrical apprentice. Many of them are being told that there is no current open apprenticeship position at this time. This causes great frustration with many of these young men and women enrolled in our program. With the aging of our skilled electrical workforce, we need to train the next generation of skilled electrical workers to keep the State of Connecticut competitive in the future.

As an electrical contractor, I feel that Senate Bill 13 is a step in the right direction. The current hiring ratio stifles workforce development in the State of Connecticut as many contractors would hire additional apprentices. The working ratio of 1 journeyman to 1 apprentice helps to train the next generation of skilled electrical workers but the current hiring ratio prohibits medium to larger contractors from hiring and training additional skilled electrical workers.

As an Instructor for both the apprenticeship and Connecticut electrical continuing education programs. I would like to also address the subject of on-line training. For continuing education, I would support an on-line program that is thoroughly reviewed by subject matter experts to ensure the program has the applicable content. For apprenticeship training, I would not be in support of on-line programs. It is very important for the safety of the apprentices and consumers that these programs have an instructor lead presence. This allows for the transfer of knowledge between an experienced instructor and the apprentices of these programs. This information and/or knowledge is being presented to these individuals 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 application of the subject matter at hand, which also leads to the importance of the interaction of the instructor with the students.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony and should you have the need to be in contact with me you can do so by email at: rich@sheaselectrical.com or by cell phone at 860-690-1640. I look forward to continuing to help this state continue the workforce development growth we need to ensure a bright future for this state.