

Testimony of Allie French  
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Senate Bill 13  
General Law Committee  
Public Hearing March 5, 2020

Good Afternoon Senator Maroney, Senator Witkos, Representative D'Agostino, Representative Cheeseman and members of the General Law Committee. My name is Allie French and I am the Executive Director at Independent Electrical Contractors of New England. In my position, I am heavily involved in both our Apprenticeship and Training Program and with our Membership. I would like to take a moment to represent how the current ratio structure as indicated in Sections 2 and 3 of this bill impacts both our apprentices and our members.

On the apprenticeship side, we have had many first-year students in the program who have struggled to find a position with a contractor. This also applies to students outside of our program; I receive phone calls from students who graduated from other trade schools in the same situation. No matter how many phone calls they make or how hard they try, some students are constantly told that the contractor does not have an open position for an apprentice; even though they need additional employees. It's discouraging that I cannot provide them any guidance or assistance.

This specific scenario is caused because of the current ratio. I would like to ask you to place yourself in the shoes of an apprentice in this situation and consider the negative impact this has on a student beginning in the trade. They are not working, therefore not earning any on the job training hours which will push out their license test date. They are unable to apply the concepts that they are learning in the classroom to real life experiences and it ultimately leaves them feeling discouraged and wondering if or when they will even find an apprenticeship position. It creates more of an opportunity or desire for the students to give up, drop from the program and choosing a different career path. This leaves one less licensed journeyman for the future. Now consider the impact this has when it happens to multiple people every single year.

I do have letters from our students that I will submit for your review. But I do want to share what one student wrote.

On behalf of our contractor members, for years I have heard that they would drastically benefit from being able to hire additional apprentices, but the current ratio does not allow them to do so without hiring additional journeypersons. This is where the problem lies as there is a shortage of quality licensed journeypersons looking for work. One may argue that this is the purpose for ratio relief, however, from the contractor perspective many are apprehensive to even apply. The application process is tedious and time consuming. There is a negative stigma attached to the concept because if a contractor does apply, they are rarely approved or only approved for a portion of what they have requested.

When you look at the overall picture, both student and contractor issues could be resolved with a 1:1 ratio. The existing ratio is counterproductive in helping the workforce development and it would be beneficial to all parties involved to make a change that will create a positive impact, especially for the trades that it so drastically effects.

Thank you for your time and attention to submit this testimony on behalf of our organization.

To whom it may concern,

Getting a job in the trade is not as easy as they say it is. I am a student at IEC New England and i have been contacting many contractors and companies for many months now and the only answer that I've been getting is, "it would be nice if we could hire you but we can't because we're looking for licensed men." Another answer I have 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 1 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/women who is willing to work and learn, it shouldn't be this hard to find work.

To Whom it may concern,

As a young apprentice it was very difficult to find my first job. It took well over 3 months to find employment. I called several contractors, over 6. Every time I was denied, I was told they need more licensed Journey men before any more apprentices could be hired. After 4 months I was finally able to start my apprenticeship, I feel bad for many fellow classmates and a few friends who are still going through the same struggles I did.

I truly hope something could be done about this. We need more electricians and trade workers, we have the work and workers, just not the opportunity.

Concerned Apprentice

To whom it may concern,

My name is Adam Pisker, I am a first year student at IEC-NE. At the beginning of the semester, I called around to multiple contractors looking for a position as an apprentice. Unfortunately, I was told by every contractor to come fill out an application and they would contact me when a position opened up for an apprentice. When I asked them approximately how long that would take, they said they had to wait for a current apprentice became licensed due to their Licensed Electrician to apprentice ratio being maxed out. It seems to be this way with all the other trades as well. I am eager to start working and wish there were more openings in the field.

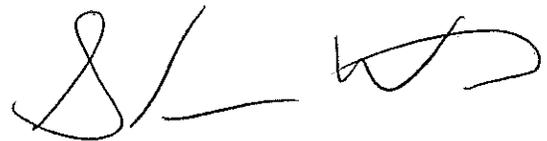
To whom this may concern,

My name is Noah Ogonowski

My Experience applying for a job was difficult & applied for months to many different companies most who turned me down simply because there wasn't enough licenced men in the company. In fact the company who hired me told me a month before hiring me that they'll most likely hire me soon but had to wait because they didn't have enough Journeyman

My name is Solomon Ward and I am a first year student at Independent Electrical Contractors of New England. After two years of college I decided to pursue the trades. Given my skills in math I decided that electrical work would be a fitting career for myself. Since enrolling last September I have reached out to dozens of electrical companies for apprenticeship and have yet to be provided an opportunity. When do I do receive a response I am told either, "We're looking for apprentices with more experience," or "we don't have any openings for apprenticeship at this time". It is now March, I have never found searching for work this difficult.

Solomon Ward,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Ward', with a stylized flourish at the end.

3/4/2020

Good afternoon, my name is Skyler Ogonowski and I am a first year student at NEC, and I have struggled to find a contractor to hire me for the last 6 months. I originally expected to not get hired by the first company but a pattern started to appear to me. It wasn't that I was bad at getting interviewed or anything personal, but I realized every contractor had given me the same reason for not hiring me. "Not enough licensed men". At first I had no clue what this meant or why it kept happening to me but at my last interview the Contractor really explained it to me because he could tell I was struggling to find a job and this was definitely not my first attempt rather than my 7th. It has made school harder for me not having a job because my knowledge is based off what i have learned in school, not experience in the field. Half the time I have no idea what the kids are talking about in class when they talk about their jobs but I have recently learned that other kids in my class are struggling to find a job all due to the same issue, and that I am not the only one. Having a job would make schooling a lot easier and give me a better classroom experience so i hope this issue can be fixed soon not only for me but for the next year students coming in looking to get started.

Thankyou

# IEC Letter

Monday, August 26, 2019 9:46 PM

Hi my name is Matthew Carbone, and I am a student at Independent Electrical Contractors of New England. I am writing this letter because I had a very hard time finding a job as an electricians apprentice. Having to live on your own is very difficult regardless but it is extremely difficult with no job. However I really love the electrical industry and therefore really think you guys should reconsider the ratio of hired licensed men to apprentices. A lot of kids really would love to get into the field and just like it was for me it is difficult for them to get hired and that is unfair, especially when you are willing to put in the hours needed to work. So please just reconsider the ratio of 3 to 1 so more kids willing to put in the work can get into the great field of electrical contracting. Thank you.