

March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020

**RE: Legislation Needed To Employ More Apprentices – Fix The Hiring Ratio in SB-13  
To General Law Committee:**

My name is Jason Jacaruso and I am a resident of Griswold and an owner of an 85 plus employee electrical, mechanical and plumbing merit shop contractor. I am here to ask you to support important needed corrections in the work force development legislation for the construction trades some of which is outlined in SB-13 sections 2&3. Although I do support aspects of this proposal and it's a good start in the right direction, merely adding just one apprentice to the trades as referenced in this bill is far from enough. We need your added support by changing the state's longstanding overly-restrictive hiring ratio outlined in this bill from the 3:1 (journeypersons to apprentices) to a 1:1 ratio; which in fact matches the current "Working Ratio" that's in place for training of our future workforce.

Let me please reiterate that the current field "Working Ratio" of journeyman to apprentice in CT as well as federally in the rest of the country is in fact 1:1. Yet the state of CT has a counterproductive rule in place that states even though we can work at a 1:1 ratio, small businesses like mine cannot hire at a 1:1 ratio but instead 3:1 ratio after our first 3 employees therefore not allowing us to reach a 1:1 working ratio in the field..... This makes no sense.... In what other industry does state government needlessly restrict and tell a private business they CAN'T hire someone while also Deterring business and economic growth? This would require simply amending D.C.P.'s statute – Section 20-332b and the ratios as shown in Governor's Bill #SB-13 section 3. This chart shown there can be a bit confusing, look at the ratio after the first 3 employees to see that the hiring limits are in fact listed out as 3:1.

Merit Shops make up over 80% of the current workforce employed in CT. Making up the majority of CT's workforce the we rely on the ability to train their own apprentices and to grow and create jobs through developing skilled labor training programs which requires a 1:1 hiring ratio to match the working ratio in place of the restrictive 3:1, limiting job creation. Mind you there is no cost to the state to make this change.

In the electrical and plumbing industry, workforce development is the number one concern right now. The electrical and plumbing trades need help to strengthen and expand our workforce in Connecticut, due to a variety of factors - including the "greying" or aging-out of our existing workforce, an emphasis on energy efficiency initiatives, and overall customer demand.

Are you aware that on average it takes 4 years of apprenticeship on the job training and schooling for an apprentice to earn the credentials required to sit for a journeyman's license exam? 4 years. Yet every year another baby boomer holding a trade license retires eliminating a trainer from the field. It takes four years to make a journeyman and the aging workforce is retiring faster than we can train incoming workers - creating a major shortage to meet the needs of the state businesses. That doesn't even address the 3:1 ratio restriction which just makes things substantially worse. If three people retire and leave the trade, we lose a training spot all together further depleting our work force.

There are a is a reporting tool in place called apprenticeship relief which allows a contractor to send in a request to be given additional apprentices to train, but it is overly complicated report and produces lack luster results. We have used the request several times per year only to be granted an extra one or two apprentice relief spots and usually less than 50% of the times requested. We also hire State Technical trade school students on a “pre-apprentice program” and we have two of those spots filled.

At our company’s current status, we have over 45 licensed journey persons, and even using these couple of relief program options, it has still limited us to only less than 19 apprentices – that’s a mere 2.4:1 ratio. If the hiring ratio was changed to 1:1 ratio to match the “working ratio” then excluding the three license holders that work in our office, our field staff alone could support 22 more apprentices and instantly create this many more jobs, plus possibly 2-3 more in our office as support staff. And trust me there is plenty of work out here for us to support the added workers. We can create tomorrow, 24 good paying jobs at our company alone. What about every other trade contractor in CT, how many can they add? That’s economic development. We are being unreasonably held back from helping ourselves, our communities, fellow workers and CT with the hiring ratio not at 1:1.

Another point to changing the apprenticeship ratio is to increase jobs - this will create real, long term and good paying jobs. These are not just minimum wage jobs. The apprentices train over the four-year period and earn their journeyman licenses increasing their average annual wages from approx. \$30,000 a year as a first-year apprentice to over \$52,000 per year as a first-year journeyman and up from there. This household economic growth and quality of life for our residences is another reason CT needs the hiring ratio fixed to 1:1 so we can help our communities thrive.

As a small business in the area we support many local charities, organizations, and the youth sports teams in a way to help give back to the community that we live and work in. By increasing the hiring ratio, we can hire and support more local people, in turn adding more opportunity and prosperity to the local communities, making it better for all. We are asking you again to support this legislation, as I’m sure that you can see how it will be good for all by employing more apprentices.

Can you help us out?

Please let me know if I can provide you with any additional information. I look forward to working with you to help grow the next generation of licensed electricians and plumbers in Connecticut.

Respectfully,

Jason Jacaruso

Griswold, CT 06351

[jjacaruso@defwiring.com](mailto:jjacaruso@defwiring.com)

860-213-0027