



**House Bill 6445, An Act Expanding Economic Opportunity in Occupations
Licensed by the Department of Consumer Protection.**

General Law Committee

February 23, 2021

The Mechanical Contractors Association of Connecticut (MCAC) is an association of trade union mechanical contractors who provide mechanical services in HVAC, plumbing, piping, sheet metal and other work, and are signatory to the Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 777 bargaining agreement.

MCAC is **opposed** to House Bill 6445 and requests that the General Law Committee **not act on the bill**. If the committee plans to approve the bill, MCAC respectfully requests that the committee exempt occupational licenses for construction from the bill.

House Bill 6445, which was introduced on behalf of the Governor to implement the budget, requires the Department of Consumer Protection to issue occupational licenses, permits and registrations to persons who move to Connecticut and have met several reciprocal conditions for holding the certification in another state.

House Bill 6445 is intended to remove barriers to workforce entry and expand and expedite access to licensed occupations for current and incoming residents, including military spouses. MCAC supports these laudable goals, however, the bill is flawed because it undermines the Connecticut apprenticeship program and standards for occupational licensing, construction, jobsites and public safety.

The bill undermines apprenticeship programs for mechanical contractors, which would seriously jeopardize the quality and safety of mechanical services performed in Connecticut. Under the bill, applicants from another jurisdiction seeking licensure in Connecticut could waive into this state without completing an apprenticeship program. Construction work in general and mechanical contracting work in particular are very dangerous jobs and inherently unsafe. Mechanical contractors participate in a rigorous apprenticeship program to ensure that apprentices learn and understand the specific skills of a trade and that the applicant is qualified for an occupational license here.

The program has helped keep workers highly skilled and trained. It has helped maintain jobsite safety while protecting consumers and the public.

House Bill 6445 does not do enough to ensure that the standards an applicant may have met in another jurisdiction are equivalent to Connecticut's. Our state's occupational licensing laws are designed to implement standards and achieve workplace conditions that are unique to the state in order to protect consumers and the public safety. Understanding codes and standards in another state to pass an exam for certification here is not enough to protect Connecticut residents. Connecticut has a strong apprenticeship program that provides on the job training to ensure an educated, skilled and safety-conscious construction workforce.

House Bill 6445 does not provide a sufficient role for the occupational licensing boards to oversee the process of ensuring applicants for an occupational license meet Connecticut's workplace standards. The boards, which are comprised of industry experts representing labor and management, were established to ensure that applicants understand Connecticut's building and fire safety codes, procedures and standards and know how work is performed in the state. They are designed to protect consumers in Connecticut.

Connecticut's apprenticeship program helps ensure construction workers are properly trained and educated, safety conscious and practice and understand the skills necessary to protect consumers and public safety. House Bill 6445 would erode those standards.

Finally, House Bill 6445 allows an occupational license holder in any other state who has held the license for only one year to come to Connecticut and sit for a licensing exam here. This would undermine Connecticut's occupational licensing program and pose significant problems for the construction industry. Construction industry jobs are inherently dangerous despite training and instruction for workers. Strong licensing standards under Connecticut's law helps determine qualified persons who can sit for examinations here and keep workers and the public safe.

Please contact Kristen Brainerd Abrahamson, Executive Vice President of MCAC, at (203) 248-3098, for additional information or any questions.