

**Re: HB 5732 - An Act Establishing Reciprocity for Certain Licenses Held By
Members of The Armed Forces**

**SB 413 – An Act Exempting Veterans from the Fees for Application or
Renewal of Occupational Licenses**

Chairman Cabrera, Chairman Boyd, Ranking Member Vail, Ranking Member Cicarella, and members of the Veterans Affairs Committee,

I write today to offer testimony on two bills as a licensed electrician in the State of CT and representative of the IBEW. I believe that supporting our veterans when they leave the service of our country is the absolute right thing to do, and I, in my past role with the IBEW as a Training Director along with others in our industry, I have helped servicemen and women enter the electrical field and also to obtain an electrical license. This is something that I will continue to do every chance I get, albeit in a different role currently, however handing out occupational licenses to people regardless of who they are or where they are coming from just because they hold an occupational license from another state is not the best way to do that.

I'd like to offer my testimony in strong opposition to **HB 5732**, "*An Act Establishing Reciprocity for Certain Licenses Held by Members of The Armed Forces.*" I believe this bill could have unintended consequences resulting in workplace injuries and a diluting of both safety and apprenticeship standards. Building construction regardless of what trade you are working in, remains one of the most dangerous careers in the workforce today.

Again, while I am primarily concerned with electrical licenses there are a number of other construction-related licenses in Connecticut such as Elevator, Fire Protection, Glazier–Auto Glass, Heating, Piping & Cooling, Plumbing & Piping, and Sheetmetal – all of which are administered by the Department of Consumer Protection (DCP) and the Crane Operators license is administered by the Department of Administrative Services (DAS). Many of these trades by the way currently have numerous CT residents and license holders out of work and handing out licenses to people from other states will not help these CT residents or their families.

Currently, if someone applies to sit for a licensing exam in Connecticut, DCP will look to see if that applicant has completed a state approved apprenticeship program. Our state's apprenticeship programs are administered by the Department of Labor's (DOL) Office of Apprenticeship Training. Each apprenticeship program approved by the State has a curriculum, which includes on-the-job hours and in-classroom hours, as well as stipulated 'earn while you learn' wages and benefits. These apprenticeship programs aren't apples to apples. Each trade has a specific curriculum and training tailored to that industry. Not only that, but licensing requirements can vary from state to state within a specific trade as well.

If an applicant for a license has completed a Connecticut approved apprenticeship program, DCP will automatically grant the application to sit for a licensing exam. If an applicant has not completed a state approved apprenticeship program, then pursuant to C.G.S. Sec. 20-333, “A recommendation for review issued pursuant to section 31-22u shall be sufficient to demonstrate that an applicant possesses such **requisite skill** [emphasis added] and can comply with all other requirements of this chapter and the regulations adopted under this chapter.”

Additionally, we already have reciprocity in statute. It can be found in Chapter 393 of the C.G.S., Sec. 20-333a, which stipulates the following:

“The Commissioner of Consumer Protection may, upon the payment of the appropriate fee, as provided in section 20-335, grant a license or a card of registration provided for in this chapter, without an examination, to any currently practicing, competent person who holds a similar license or card of registration granted by any other state, licensure jurisdiction within another state, the District of Columbia or any territory or commonwealth of the United States having licensure or registration requirements substantially similar to, or higher than, those of this state, if the licensing authority in such other state, licensure jurisdiction within another state, the District of Columbia or any territory or commonwealth of the United States may grant such similar license or card of registration, without an examination, to any currently practicing, competent licensee or registrant from this state. The commissioner, in consultation with the appropriate examining board, may adopt regulations in accordance with the provisions of chapter 54 to carry out the provisions of this section.”

We can only assume by the intentionally broad wording of HB 5732 that the proponent of this bill either did not know that the reciprocity language already exists in our code. Or, the proponent wants to weaken the reciprocity statute to either remove language that provides oversight and accountability like, “registration requirements substantially similar to, or higher than, those of this state,” or to remove the mandate that reciprocity is only triggered when another State or the District of Columbia grants, “such similar license or card of registration, without an examination, to any currently practicing, competent licensee or registrant from this state.” Either way is bad policy, and it would only inflict harm on our state’s workforce.

As I noted before, construction is a dangerous industry. Sadly, there are times when construction workers don’t come home from work, I’ve been on some of those jobsites myself. Even in the most controlled of environments, mistakes can still happen. That is why strict safety standards, occupational licensing standards, and good workplace protections must be a cornerstone of Connecticut’s approach to economic development. Any deviation from these standards could undermine the integrity of our State’s construction industry and could result in workplace injuries or fatalities.

Occupational licensing requirements must not be watered down, therefore, I ask this committee to wholly reject HB 5732.

I'd also like to submit testimony in support of **SB 413**, "*An Act Exempting Veterans from the Fees for Application or Renewal of Occupational Licenses.*"

I think this Bill is a good way to offer those exiting the service and looking to pursue a career in the licensed trades here in CT a fair way to obtain a license in their chosen profession provided they meet the current licensing requirements for the State of CT. Applicants would still be required to take an examination which would test their skills and knowledge in their intended trade, which will help keep the industry safer while relieving the applicant of any financial burden that the application and testing process may place on them.

Therefore, I ask the committee to support SB 413 and for a Joint Favorable Vote.

I'd like to that the Chairs, Ranking members, and distinguished members of the Veterans Affairs Committee for your time and consideration.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael A. D'Amico

Michael A. D'Amico
IBEW Second District
Mike_DAmico@ibew.org