

INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS



LOCAL 99

Joseph L. Walsh, Jr.
Business Manager

Wayne A. Tait
President

22 Amflex Drive
Cranston, RI 02921
P: (401) 946-9900
F: (401) 946-9907
www.IBEW99.org

March 7, 2024

Representative Joseph Solomon
Chairman House Corporations
HouseCorporations@rilegislature.gov

RE: Opposition to: H-7608 AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- OCCUPATIONAL LICENSING REFORM ACT

Dear Chairman Solomon,

On behalf of the 800 women and men of IBEW Local Union 99, I am writing to **oppose H-7608**.

I am not only the Business Manager but like the vast majority of those I represent, I am also a licensed Electrician by trade in several states. I have qualified for, sat for, and passed four State license exams. Both the men and women I directly represent and our colleagues in the open-shop have gone through this same process for the licenses they have earned. That process has sadly become increasingly easier over the years, which has allowed for lower standards to be considered a skilled trades person.

The title of this bill itself implies that occupational licensing needs reform. I am not very well versed on occupations outside of the skilled construction trades that are regulated by the Division of Professional Regulation but I am extremely well versed on those that fall under that umbrella. If the intention of this bill was to lower the standards for occupations that fall outside of the State of Rhode Island Division of Professional Regulation, then the bill should have been drafted as such.

We are extremely fortunate that the current Governor and the current Director of the Department of Labor have great respect for all workers and for trade licensing. If this bill were to become law this year, I am certain the current Department Director would not leave the door unattended and allow people to bypass the tried-and-true method of testing and evaluation. However, Governors eventually change and Department Directors eventually change and every person may not have the same respect for public safety or Rhode Island workers and the investment they have made in their craft.

This bill would not only allow any and all license authorities to toss aside the only verifiable metric the State has control over in the process; it would proliferate the exact same issue the un-licensed trades witness currently. Marginally qualified people coming into Rhode Island from states that have a cost of living that is significantly less than that of Rhode Island. They cast Rhode Island workers out of work as they work for scraps, live on the jobsites, and then return home with their meager earnings. There is always questionable support of the tax system of RI or workman's compensation while they are here. That will be the result of weakening the current standards of testing and evaluations.

Local 99 will continue to fight against any diminishment of public safety or erosion of the laws that protect the rights of Rhode Island workers, union or open-shop. I again urge you to **reject H-7608** and any bill of the sort that seeks to break down the industry proven norms and puts the public safety and the workers literal health and financial health in danger.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph L. Walsh, Jr.", is written over a horizontal line.

Joseph L. Walsh, Jr. / Business Manager

cc:

Paul Macdonald / IBEW Local 99 Lobbyist
Committee Members
RI AFL-CIO
BuildRI
Pat Donlan / SMART Local 17
Paul Alvarez / UA 51
James White / IUOE Local 57