

JCody @ Smart-Nerc.org

Good afternoon,

My name is John Cody and on behalf of SMART Local 17—the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers in Rhode Island, I'm pleased to join you today. We strongly support H5597.

Sheet Metal Workers Local 17 is a building trade union representing more than 2,700 skilled and licensed workers throughout Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire and Rhode Island. We stand together as the most highly trained professionals in the industry, bringing top safety standards and quality to every project—including improving indoor air quality in Rhode Island schools.

We strongly support this bill because our students, teachers and community deserve proper indoor air quality. The benefits are significant, including increased attendance, improved student and teacher performance and improved health. The key to achieving proper indoor air quality is making sure skilled, trained and certified personnel—our union members, perform the work.

Numerous studies have documented that poor quality work is common and leads to reduced energy efficiency and increased safety hazards. In fact, poor quality installation of HVAC systems results in a 20% to 30% increase in energy use. Studies have found that when HVAC installers don't have the technical training, knowledge, skills, or abilities to properly install systems, there are high failure rates for job performance on even routine tasks.

However, H5597 addresses workforce quality by ensuring skilled, trained and certified workers in Rhode Island are tasked with doing the work so it is done correctly, efficiently and safely. This is a win-win for Rhode Island. It helps make sure our tax dollars are being used effectively to ensure there is proper training and installation practices followed. It's the best way to make sure the air we breathe is safe.

And Local 17 is poised to hit the ground running to implement H5597. Jointly with SMACNA—the Sheet Metal Air Conditioning National Contractors Association, we sponsor a Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee (JATC). Our training center in Providence has a proven track record of training sheet metal workers to build, install, repair and maintain HVAC systems correctly and safely. Our training program helps to lift people in Rhode Island into the middle class. In fact, it's a debt-free training program where apprentices obtain free classroom training, mentorship, and on-the-job instruction from experienced professionals. Apprentices earn while they learn, with a guarantee that they'll receive wage increases as they learn new skills. The combination of broad-based training, continuing education, good wages, health insurance, and pension benefits makes sure that graduates of our program maintain a middle-class standard of living through their careers and in retirement.

We have the workforce in Rhode Island to implement H5597 to help schools achieve proper indoor air quality. We urge this committee to swiftly advance this bill.