

Representative Arthur Corvese
Chair, House Committee on Labor
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Opposition to H8277 – Impact on Trade Licensure Pathways

Dear Chairman Corvese,

Please accept this letter as formal opposition to House Bill 8277, specifically the section that eliminates or reduces credit toward licensure hours for students who complete an associate degree in a relevant trade.

Every trades-related program at New England Tech, including plumbing, is guided by Technical Advisory Committees made up of Rhode Island employers—contractors, business owners, and industry leaders who actively hire our graduates. These committees meet regularly and play a direct role in shaping curriculum, lab instruction, safety training, and competencies. What we teach is not theoretical; it is employer-driven and aligned with real job requirements.

The training hours recognized under current law—576 hours of structured, formal instruction—were not arbitrarily created. They exist because of a collaboration with the union and employers who helped design them. These hours cover safety, code compliance, system design, and hands-on lab work that directly supports what happens on job sites.

H8277 would reduce those recognized training hours to 288, while also eliminating on-the-job training credit for associate degree graduates. From an educational and employer-accountability standpoint, that is troubling. This bill does not question whether training is occurring in an associate degree program—it simply discounts it, despite decades of employer validation and successful outcomes.

Associate degree programs and apprenticeships are not in competition with one another. They are complementary pathways that serve different learners. Our employer partners consistently tell us that graduates of our programs arrive well prepared, safety-conscious, and able to contribute right away.

After decades of proven success, it is difficult to understand why this associates degree pathway, outcomes-based model is being rolled back.

I respectfully urge the Committee to oppose H8277 as written and to preserve long-standing, employer-validated pathway into the plumbing profession.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate your continued attention to the needs of Rhode Island's workforce and employers.

Sincerely,

Doug Sherman
Sr. Vice President and Provost
New England Institute of Technology
East Greenwich and Warwick, RI