

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

Re: Opposition to H8277 – Loss of Licensure Credit and Training Hours

Dear Chairman Corvese,

My name is Bill Riley, and I am the owner of William J. Riley Plumbing & Heating, a company I founded and have operated for 49 years in Warwick, Rhode Island. I am writing to express my opposition to **House Bill 8277**, specifically the provisions that reduce credit toward licensure and significantly diminish recognized training hours for students graduating from associate degree programs in the plumbing trade.

As an employer who has spent nearly five decades hiring, training, and mentoring plumbers, I can say unequivocally that Rhode Island's current system has worked. The combination of classroom instruction, lab-based training, and credit toward licensure for associate degree graduates has created competent, job-ready plumbers who contribute productively to our industry and our local economy.

In addition to eliminating the 4,000 hours of credited on-the-job training previously available to associate degree graduates, H8277 would also **cut recognized training hours nearly in half - from 576 hours to just 288 hours**. This reduction is deeply concerning. These training hours represent structured, formal education that directly supports safe work practices, technical competency, and code compliance. Reducing them sends the wrong message about the value of trade education and undermines the preparation of future plumbers.

Associate degree programs have consistently produced employees who enter the workforce with a strong foundation and a higher level of readiness than individuals starting without any formal training. Treating this education as less valuable, or stripping away the credit it currently receives, will only slow the path to licensure, delay earning potential, and make it more difficult for small and mid-sized contractors like myself to recruit skilled workers.

The plumbing industry already faces significant workforce shortages. Making it harder for individuals to enter the trade, especially through long-standing, proven educational pathways, will only worsen the problem. This bill does not improve safety or quality; instead, it removes incentives for education and reduces access to a reliable pipeline of trained professionals.

After nearly 50 years in this business, I strongly believe Rhode Island should be expanding opportunities to enter the trades, not narrowing them. For these reasons, I respectfully urge the House Committee on Labor to oppose H8277 as written and to preserve both licensure credit and recognized training hours for associate degree graduates in the plumbing trade.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Bill Riley