

INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS



LOCAL 99

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February 1, 2022

Honorable Representative Anastasia Williams
Chairperson
House Committee on Labor
State House
Providence, RI

**RE: Support of H-7027 AN ACT RELATING TO PUBLIC PROPERTY AND WORKS -- LABOR AND PAYMENT
OF DEBTS BY CONTRACTORS**

Dear Madam Chair,

As Business Manager of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Union 99, I represent 800 Women and Men who provide their skills for our seventy-two signatory contractors in the Electrical Industry in the State of Rhode Island and nearby Massachusetts.

I wish to express our **support for H-7027** to require apprenticeship programs and truthful reporting thereof, on public school construction projects in excess of \$5,000,000.

Apprenticeship is as old as craft workers themselves. The first apprentice programs recognized by statute originated in the Middle Ages across the ocean and in the United States well over 100 years ago.

I, myself, came into the trade when legitimate apprenticeship was often not considered of value by the open-shop or the State of Rhode Island. After I had earned my Journey Level licenses in the open-shop, both in RI and MA, I was ultimately granted membership into the IBEW.

Understanding my education was far from comparable to the Union trained electrical workers, I made a choice to enter into the Union apprentice program. This was after the State of Rhode Island already recognized me as a Journey Level electrician. Although a considerable investment of my time, this was the best decision I had ever made.

When a contractor understands that we all have a part in sculpting the journey level workers of the future, they will equally understand that all great accomplishments require an investment.

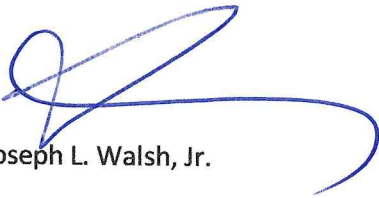
When a man or woman enter into an apprenticeship, it becomes a mutually beneficial relationship with the contractor. The contractor, staffing projects in the proper ratio, will provide critical on-the-job real world experience for the apprentice to complement their required concurrent classroom education. For many younger persons, the contractor is making an investment in them at this point. As the apprentice blossoms in their craft, the needle will ultimately shift into the contractor's favor. The raw material that was molded into an artisan, when trained properly, will now be a skilled, productive, safe, efficient, and valuable member of the team. For many younger workers, particularly from underserved communities,

apprenticeship is not only the doorknob that was once out of reach, it is quite literally an incredibly effective conveyance directly into the middle class.

When apprenticeship is taken seriously as it should be, the initial investment in the worker of tomorrow will pay dividends to the contractor in successful projects. It will pay dividends to the workers in the ability to maintain gainful employment. And it will pay dividends to the customer, which in this case is the taxpayer, by providing properly trained workers to safely and efficiently perform the work and will pay dividends for the citizenry to assure there are skilled workers to continue to build a better world for all of us.

In conclusion, from my own experience, I am 100% proof positive that a worker without real and sincere apprenticeship is destined to struggle in his or her chosen trade if that door is not open. From a hundred years of historical experience in our Nation, it is also proven that you build better craft workers through apprenticeship. There is no question that apprenticeship is the proper way to create better craftsmen and craftswomen. The only question is: why are some unwilling to elevate their fellow human and set them on a path to a life of success?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Joseph L. Walsh, Jr.', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Joseph L. Walsh, Jr.

cc:

Jimmy DeCastro / Committee Clerk

Paul Macdonald / Lobbyist

Esteemed Committee Members