



**Penn-Del-Jersey Chapter
National Electrical Contractors Association**

March 22, 2016

Senator Lisa Baker
Chair
Senate Labor and Industry Committee
Room 362 Main Capitol
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Senator Christina M. Tartaglione
Minority Chair
Senate Labor and Industry Committee
458 Main Capitol
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Members of the Senate Labor and Industry Committee,

I write today on behalf of the Penn-Del-Jersey Chapter of the National Electrical Contractors Association to comment on the efforts of the Committee to examine the future of apprenticeship programs in Pennsylvania. I thank the Committee for their commitment to our state's future workforce and for holding a public hearing on March 22, 2016 in order to better understand some aspects of our apprentice programs in Pennsylvania.

Our Chapter serves roughly 150 member electrical contractors in Eastern Pennsylvania and Delaware; our affiliated contractors employ over 10,000 people and perform over \$1 billion of work each year. In addition, our Chapter jointly sponsors 13 apprentice programs in Eastern Pennsylvania and the State of Delaware with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW). Our programs are privately funded, require no public funding, and apprentices are paid to attend.

NECA's training alliance with the IBEW is critical to our industry. Today's electrical installations are highly complex and sophisticated. Faulty installations and other defects in work are hazardous and expensive to correct. That is why the IBEW/NECA Apprenticeship Programs spend millions each year to recruit, develop, and retain a qualified workforce for our contractors and consumers. The apprentices we train and employ receive on the job skill training along with trade-related classroom training in order to ensure competency and prevent injuries. We believe that investing in a quality apprenticeship program ensures the successful transition into the electrical industry and increases the opportunity for productive employment in the electrical trade after completion.

There has been some discussion of apprentice ratios, which is the number of apprentices in training that may work under the supervision of a number of experienced journeymen at one time. This ratio is designed to protect apprentices' health and welfare on the job and to develop qualified journeyman electricians through quality training and proper supervision. Federal regulations require programs to establish a ratio of apprentices to journeymen consistent with proper supervision, training, safety and continuity of employment. Reducing the ratio would increase jobsite risks and reduce the availability of hands-on supervision by skilled journeymen who are dedicated to the development of skilled electricians.

The Committee is considering two Bills, SB 280 and SB 761, which would drastically change the composition and duties of the State Apprentice Council, and/or abolishing the Council to allow for federal control of our apprentice programs. Currently, states are about evenly split between those that authorize apprentice programs at the state versus the federal level; both models are permitted and can be effective in developing a skilled and competitive workforce. Adjustments to our state's regulatory structure are concerning, as our members are job creators who rely on a competent and responsive regulatory authority that understands the industry it regulates. Therefore I am skeptical of proposals offering sweeping changes of the regulatory environment that could have unintended consequences on our industry.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to comment on your efforts to examine our state's apprentice programs. If I can be of assistance to you or your staff moving forward, please do not hesitate to contact me at 267-804-0151.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey P. Scarpello
Executive Director
NECA, Penn-Del-Jersey Chapter