

# **Labor and Public Employees Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT**

**Bill No.:** HB-5704

**Title:** AN ACT CREATING A CONSTRUCTION PIPELINE PROGRAM.

**Vote Date:** 3/20/2025

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 2/20/2025

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Labor & Public Employees Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

The reason for this bill is to create a Construction Pipeline Program, similar to the existing Manufacturing Pipeline Program, in order to strengthen the construction industry and improve the overall status of the skilled trades workforce in the state.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

**Danté Bartolomeo, Commissioner, Department of Labor:** Welcomes the opportunity to learn more from the proponents regarding CTDOL's potential role in creating a new construction pipeline program, as outlined. Adding they would look forward to discussing current programming available through organizations such as the Home Builders Institute, whose purpose is to prepare individuals for careers in the building industry.

**Dr. Kelli-Marie Vallieres, Chief Workforce Officer, Office of Workforce Strategy:** Offered remarks on the bill. The testimony discussed the importance of developing training programs that consider best practices as well as the needs of employers and the relevant stakeholders, and specifically highlighted that "the employer-driven demand model is a key pillar of OWS' strategy...". They noted the success of existing training initiatives for the construction industry and their participation in those programs.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

**Vincent Candelora, Minority Leader, CT General Assembly House Republicans:** Supports the bill. States the bill will help build a larger and more robust construction workforce through expanded apprenticeship tax credits, pre-apprenticeship education

funding, reforming the apprenticeship ratio, and a continued focus on developing and strengthening Connecticut's workforce of skilled tradespeople. Adding the proposal begins by expanding tax credits available for apprenticeship training in the construction trades allowing more apprentices to be hired and providing more training and experience. Adding the proposal expands eligibility to utilize the tax credit to pass-through entities, encouraging a greater number of construction firms to invest in training. Adding the bill also expands the pre-apprenticeship grant program to include construction trades to award grants to any local or regional board of education that incorporates a construction trades pre-apprenticeship program in the curriculum for grades nine to twelve, as well as changing to a one-to-one ratio of all apprentices to journeypersons. Lastly, the proposal establishes a "Construction Pipeline Working Group" to enhance workforce development in the trades and provide recommendations for strengthening the construction workforce and will help to create more opportunities for students and workers to become skilled tradespeople in the construction field by helping businesses create more opportunities.

**Paul Amarone, Public Policy Associate & Advocacy Manager CBIA:** Supports the bill. States the trades industry is looking to increase participation among students and recent graduates to fill the quickly vacating openings left by an aging skilled trades workforce. Recommend incorporating dual credit, pre-apprenticeship, and work-based learning opportunities into both CTECS schools and comprehensive high schools, as well as exploring financial incentives for employers offering apprenticeship opportunities. Adding another key component to consider for this bill is adjusting the state's current hiring ratio of 3:1 after the first three apprentices to a 1:1 ratio. Currently, electrical, plumbing, heating, and cooling, piping, and sprinkler fitting, and sheet metal work are all held to a 3:1 hiring ratio. Stating the hiring ratio to a 1:1 ratio could lead to more residential and commercial construction, adding it will also lead to better workforce development because companies will be able to train more workers which would also mean more license and registration fees as well as more income tax revenue both brought from having more workers in the workforce and the ability to build more projects in the state at once.

**Allie French, IEC New England:** Supports the bill. States a construction pipeline will make a positive impact on addressing some of the hardships that the construction industry and skilled trades have faced over the last several years. States the expansion of available tax credits will allow employers to expand their training opportunities, in turn, producing more highly trained apprentices which will lead to quality journey workers down the road. The efforts to expand the credit to pass-through entities allows for overall growth in respective businesses and the industry overall. Adding that hundreds to thousands of jobs would be able to be created with changing the journeyman to apprentice ratio to 1:1 from 3:1. The "Construction Pipeline Working Group" would be an asset to the construction industry. This working group would be able to monitor trends and related data to make educated recommendations to continue efforts to move the industry in a positive direction adding It is critical to create a sustainable workforce. Stating IEC New England would like to offer our assistance to this working group.

**Stillman Jordan, P.E., C.E.M. President Environmental Control President, Connecticut Heating & Cooling Contractors Association:** Supports the bill. States that workforce development is the single greatest challenge facing the field today, and demand for skilled trades is increasing at a historic pace and that the HVAC industry does not have enough trained professionals to meet demand. Adding the pipeline of incoming workers is insufficient

and a similar approach to the Connecticut Manufacturing Pipeline Program, must be applied to construction and skilled trades. Stating this will ensure workforce stability, economic growth, infrastructure improvements, more jobs, and a return on investment that will keep Connecticut competitive.

**Kane D'Amico, Connecticut Heating & Cooling Contractors Association's (CHCC) Government Affairs Chairman, and the Vice President of Alliance Heating & Air Conditioning, Inc.:** Supports the bill. States they know firsthand the impact that access to high-quality training can have on an individual's future and the bill is about creating opportunity, providing students and career seekers with real pathways into skilled trades. Adding Connecticut has a growing demand for these skilled professionals, and we need a structured approach to help people gain the right training and credentials to meet that demand, so a stronger pipeline of well-trained individuals who see the trades as a first-choice career, not a fallback. States the success of Eastern CT Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative proves that this model works, and we need to apply it to construction trades.

**Jenn Jennings, Executive Director of the Connecticut Heating & Cooling Contractors Association, member of their Board of Education:** Supports the bill. States the bill creates a construction pipeline program, considers expanding career pathways in all Connecticut public high schools, and redefines how students are prepared for successful careers. States CTECS is a tremendous asset, but it has limited capacity and is not the right fit for every student. Adding many students are unaware of career possibilities in the skilled trades this bill ensures that students who remain in their home districts have access to meaningful career exploration. Adds this bill is about structured exposure and does not require expensive shop facilities, instead it could establish a 120-hour, two-course sequence within existing Career & Technical Education (CTE) programs, providing credentialed instruction toward licensure, just as AP or Early College Experience (ECE) courses offer college-bound students. States that for too long the message that success only comes with a four-year degree, the trades are essential, innovative, and financially stable careers, let's invest in real, tangible career pathways that meet student needs and industry demands.

**Jim Perras, CEO-HBRA of CT:** Supports the bill. States Connecticut is experiencing a severe skilled labor shortage, with the average age of a construction worker now at 45 years old. If action is not taken, this aging workforce will exacerbate existing delays in housing production, slow job creation, and hinder our state's energy efficiency goals. Urges the addition to change from 3:1 to 1:1 in Journeyman-to-Apprentice Hiring Ratios to, open new careers to young adults, address the labor shortage Provide businesses with flexibility to train more apprentices without compromising safety. Adding in that an increase the Construction Apprenticeship Tax Credit and expanded eligibility to passthrough entities, and funding for the School Pre-Apprenticeship Grant Program, both will help to get more people in the workforce. They also recommend creating a working group to provide recommendation on workforce development. States the need a Construction Workforce Pipeline Working Group will make a coordinated strategy to ensure Connecticut has the skilled workforce it needs, to build the projects we need.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None provided.

**Reported by: Ian Graves**

**Date: 4/4/2025**