

## Commerce Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-6786

**Title:** AN ACT CONCERNING THE HIRING RATIO FOR SKILLED TRADES.

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

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Change of Reference to General Law

**PH Date:** 2/27/2025

**File No.:**

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### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. Jill Barry, 31<sup>st</sup> District.  
Rep. Tim Ackert, 8<sup>th</sup> District.  
Rep. Devin R. Carney, 23<sup>rd</sup> District.  
Sen. Henri Martin, 31<sup>st</sup> District.  
Rep. Tammy Nuccio, 53<sup>rd</sup> District.  
Rep. Brian Lanoue, 45<sup>th</sup> District.  
Rep. Greg S. Howard, 43<sup>rd</sup> District.  
Rep. Joseph P. Gresko, 121<sup>st</sup> District.  
Rep. Irene M. Haines, 34<sup>th</sup> District.  
Rep. Renee LaMark Muir, 36<sup>th</sup> District.  
Sen. Rob Sampson, 16<sup>th</sup> District.  
Rep. Tami Zawistowski, 61<sup>st</sup> District.  
Rep. Ben McGorty, 122<sup>nd</sup> District.  
Rep. John Santanella, 58<sup>th</sup> District.  
Rep. Hector Arzeno, 151<sup>st</sup> District.  
Rep. Jaime S. Foster, 57<sup>th</sup> District.  
Rep. Joe Canino, 65<sup>th</sup> District.  
Sen. Ryan Fazio, 36<sup>th</sup> District.

## REASONS FOR BILL:

The purpose of this bill is to provide flexibility in apprentice hiring for licensed contractors in trades like electrical, plumbing, and HVAC when they do not meet the existing journeyman-to-apprentice hiring ratio. By allowing businesses to apply for relief from the ratio requirements, the bill aims to address labor shortages, support workforce development, and expand opportunities for apprentices to gain experience. It also ensures accountability by requiring businesses to meet good-standing criteria and track apprentice progress. Ultimately, the bill seeks to strengthen Connecticut's skilled trades workforce while maintaining fair labor practices.

## RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Kevin Clark, Campus President, Lincoln Technical Institute](#): He explains that the current restrictive ratio creates barriers for students at his institution and other aspiring tradespeople in fields like electrical work, plumbing, HVAC, and sheet metal. By adopting a 1:1 ratio, the bill would provide more apprenticeship opportunities, support small businesses, align Connecticut with best practices in other states, and enhance workforce development. Clark argues that this change will foster economic growth, job creation, and improve the state's competitiveness, all while ensuring better training and career outcomes for apprentices. He strongly supports HB 6786.

## NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Tim Ackert, Connecticut General Assembly, State Representative](#): An experienced electrician and apprenticeship instructor, also a State Representative, argues that the bill will create more career opportunities in the skilled trades by adjusting hiring restrictions. He emphasizes Connecticut's need for more licensed trade workers and criticizes the current hiring ratio as an unnecessary barrier that limits job creation. The bill would replace the hiring ratio with a job site ratio (one licensed worker per apprentice), maintaining safety while expanding access to apprenticeships. He believes this change will support economic growth, help meet environmental and housing goals, and ensure a strong future workforce as older tradespeople retire.

[Jonathan Adamczyk](#): He's a first-year apprentice, supports HB 6786, which would change the journeyman-to-apprentice hiring ratio from 3:1 to 1:1. He argues that the current system creates a bottleneck, limiting opportunities for apprentices and making it difficult to find sponsors. This restriction leads many to leave the state or abandon the trade, worsening Connecticut's skilled labor shortage as experienced workers retire. He believes the bill offers a practical solution by aligning on-site supervision with hiring rules, creating more opportunities and ensuring a strong future workforce.

Paul Amarone, Public Policy Associate & Advocacy Manager, Connecticut Business & Industry Association (CBIA): CBIA supports HB 6786, allowing businesses to hire more apprentices and address workforce shortages. With an aging labor force and limited opportunities for young workers, Connecticut risks losing talent to neighboring states with less restrictive hiring rules. The change would boost workforce development, accelerate housing and infrastructure projects, and increase state revenue. Concerns about safety and wages are addressed by existing regulations, and the current exemption process is inefficient. CBIA urges lawmakers to pass HB 6786 to support economic growth and strengthen Connecticut's skilled trades.

Kane Amico: HB 6786 would adjust the hiring ratio to 1:1, enabling contractors to expand their teams, create jobs, and provide career opportunities for veterans, trade school graduates, and others entering the workforce. Connecticut faces a severe skilled labor shortage, and the current hiring restrictions discourage young workers from pursuing trades. This bill requires no funding, harms no businesses, and will immediately create jobs upon passage. Supporters argue that rejecting it would hinder workforce development and Connecticut's economic future.

John Apuzzo: "I support bill HB06786the hiring ration for the skilled trades."

George Ballard: A former Electrical Department Head and electrician/business owner supports a 1:1 hiring ratio, citing difficulties in placing students as apprentices due to current restrictions. Smaller companies struggle to meet ratio requirements, limiting hiring, while larger companies face even greater challenges. This negatively impacts business growth and prevents young people from entering the trades, earning a good living, and staying in Connecticut.

Jill Barry, Connecticut General Assembly, State Representative: He emphasizes that HB 6786 addresses three major issues: workforce development, disconnected youth, and affordable housing. The shortage of skilled labor hinders housing development, and adjusting the hiring ratio will help meet demand. Additionally, more young people are choosing trades over college, but job opportunities are limited due to hiring restrictions. Personal experiences, including students celebrating the bill and local youth wanting to enter family businesses, highlight the bill's importance. Passing HB 6786 will create jobs, support businesses, and strengthen communities.

Tom Beaudoin, President T&T Electrical Contractor's, Inc: The current system limits opportunities for aspiring apprentices, forcing many to seek work elsewhere or remain unemployed. With many experienced electricians retiring, the state is not training enough replacements. The bill proposes a 1:1 ratio, allowing contractors to hire more apprentices, strengthen the workforce, and meet growing demand. Tom, an electrical contractor, emphasizes that this change would enable him to hire at least 30 new employees, helping both individuals and the state's economy.

[Chip Beckett, Chairman, CT Independent Party](#): He emphasizes its importance for workforce development and addressing disaffected youth. Drawing from his medical background, he suggests that trades, like doctors, can benefit from apprentices handling various tasks while learning technical skills. With over 100,000 housing units needed and a wave of baby boomer retirements, Connecticut must expand apprenticeship opportunities to build a stable workforce. He questions whether the current restrictive ratio truly ensures quality and safety or serves as a barrier to job opportunities.

[David Bertozzi](#): "I am in full support of changing Ratio to 1 to 1 Journeyman to Apprentice. As it is now it is harmful to the industry as well as making us noncompetitive with other states which do not have these burdensome ratios. We are losing young quality trainees to other states. This should be corrected for the health of our work force in CT."

[Terry Berube](#): The restrictive 3:1 hiring ratio is shrinking the labor force and preventing apprentices from learning from experienced electricians. Due to a lack of available licensed electricians, companies struggle to hire both journeymen and apprentices, leaving many aspiring workers without opportunities. The ratio relief process is slow and ineffective, further delaying workforce growth. Without a 1:1 hiring ratio, businesses cannot expand, take on new projects, or meet customer demands, ultimately weakening Connecticut's skilled trades industry.

[Justin Bird](#): Students in the electrical trade thrive through hands-on learning in the workplace, but many struggle to find jobs due to hiring restrictions that prioritize journeypersons over apprentices. It is discouraging to see eager young individuals unable to secure opportunities in a field they are passionate about. Practical experience, combined with education, is essential for their success, just as it was for previous generations. Reducing hiring restrictions will ensure aspiring electricians gain the skills they need to build strong careers.

[Joseph Brian Bonner Owner Bonner Electric, Inc.](#): The 3:1 hiring ratio in the electrical industry has led to a severe shortage of technicians, preventing contractors from hiring technical school graduates and limiting opportunities for aspiring tradespeople. This restriction impacts hiring but not workplace safety or site practices. Shifting to a 1:1 ratio would remove barriers for trade businesses, allowing them to grow and create more high-quality jobs. If passed, this bill would immediately enable companies to hire more apprentices and help address Connecticut's workforce shortages.

[John Bowman](#): F.F. Hitchcock Co., a long-standing Connecticut business, relies on well-trained employees to ensure customer safety and comfort. With 20 apprentices currently employed and six waiting to register, the company faces hiring challenges due to restrictive apprentice ratios. Many eager applicants must be turned away, limiting opportunities for workforce growth. Supporting HB 6786 would expand hiring and training, allowing the company to immediately add 10 apprentices and help strengthen the skilled trades industry in Connecticut.

[Nathan Breglio, President, Crest Mechanical Services Inc:](#) He's a third-generation owner of a Hartford-based mechanical construction company who is urging lawmakers to support HB06786. This change is needed to address the shortage of young people entering the mechanical trades and would help companies like theirs hire and train more apprentices, ultimately benefiting underprivileged youth and improving the future workforce. He argues that opposing the bill would hinder the education and career opportunities of many young Connecticut residents.

[Matt Briand, President, Edgerton Inc:](#) This bill would help address the shortage of skilled labor by enabling contractors to hire and train more apprentices, ensuring the next generation receives hands-on training. It would also allow businesses like Edgerton, Inc. to make larger investments in apprenticeship programs, speeding up training and creating long-term careers for apprentices. Additionally, the bill is seen as crucial for meeting the growing demand for HVAC and plumbing services and ensuring that companies can continue to provide high-quality service.

[David Burgess, Sales:](#) "One to one ratio is more than fair and affordable."

[Gary Burt, Water System Sales:](#) "I SUPPORT HB6786"

[James Bye, Hiring Manager, BFZ Electric:](#) He highlights how this ratio prevents his company from hiring eager, educated, and motivated young electricians, many of whom have completed trade school but struggle to find work due to the ratio. The bill would help address the shortage of electricians in Connecticut by allowing more apprentices to be hired, ensuring the future workforce is strong and fulfilling the promises made to trade students.

[Nicholas Chase:](#) He's an apprentice electrician, shares their personal experience of how the current 3:1 journeyman-to-apprentice ratio delayed their path to becoming licensed, even though they were fortunate to have job security before starting their apprenticeship. They highlight the struggles of many young, qualified individuals who are turned away from apprenticeship opportunities because companies have already reached their apprentice limits.

[Angela Cichon:](#) She's a parent from Columbia, Connecticut, describes how their two sons chose to study the electrical trade at Windham Technical High School. While their older son successfully found an apprenticeship, their younger son, a senior, has faced significant challenges in securing an apprenticeship despite reaching out to 80 companies. She argues that Connecticut's population growth and the retirement of experienced contractors require changes to these laws, and support efforts by Representative Tim Ackert to update them.

[Joseph Dion:](#) Despite completing a 1-year trade school program, he was turned away from many companies due to a lack of available journeymen or because companies only wanted more experienced apprentices. He highlights how this ratio causes many apprentices to drop out or seek opportunities in other states, leading to a shortage of skilled electricians in Connecticut.

Steve Dupere, Prefabrication Shop Manager, BFZ Electric: Steve, who works closely with apprentices, describes the frustration young professionals face due to the outdated 3:1 apprentice-to-journeyman ratio. Despite having the qualifications and motivation, many apprentices are unable to secure positions because companies cannot legally hire them under the current system.

Joseph DuPuis: "We are wanting to expand our company but cannot do that due to the apprentice ratio requirements, we have 8 licensed fitters but can only have 5 apprentices right now. If the ratio was changed to a 1 to 1 ratio we could hire 3 more apprentices."

Bruce Dworak, President, CTMA: He argues that the current ratio limits opportunities for young workers, leaving them out of work and hindering small trades companies. The change would support workforce development, helping the state meet its housing, energy, and infrastructure needs. A 1:1 ratio would allow more apprentices to join the workforce, reduce project timelines and costs, improve job access, and ensure a sufficient skilled workforce to meet critical state goals.

George Economovich: He recounts their own difficult experience securing an apprenticeship at Tesla Energy, where competition for limited spots led to delays and a negative work environment. He argues that changing the ratio would provide more apprenticeship opportunities and help address the shortage of electricians in Connecticut, a problem affecting contractors, homeowners, businesses, and municipalities alike.

Frank Festini, President, Southport Construction: "This is a bill I support. Our hiring ratios are antiquated and make it difficult for business to hire skilled trades. In addition, we have a very obvious trade workforce shortage that the current regulations perpetuate."

Joesph Fontana, Director of Estimating, P.J. Lodola & Sons: P.J. Lodola & Sons, a Connecticut-based electrical contractor for 97 years, is struggling to grow its workforce due to a restrictive three-to-one hiring ratio for apprentices. Although many applicants seek apprenticeships, the company is unable to hire them despite having the capacity. This limitation is impacting workforce growth and business expansion. Additionally, the company faces an aging workforce, with retiring journeymen not being replaced due to these hiring restrictions. He emphasizes the need for more apprenticeship opportunities to sustain their industry.

Allie French, Executive Director, Independent Electrical Contractors of New England: She highlights the challenges posed by Connecticut's restrictive hiring ratio for apprentices in skilled trades such as electrical, plumbing, and HVAC. The current system allows a 1:1 ratio for the first three apprentices but increases to a 3:1 ratio (three journeypersons per apprentice) afterward, limiting opportunities for workforce growth. She argues that this restriction prevents contractors from filling open positions, exacerbates an aging workforce issue, and denies young workers the chance to enter the trades. A recent survey indicated that about 400 apprentices could be hired under a 1:1 ratio, yet contractors struggle to find qualified journeymen due to retirements and out-of-state migration. She also criticizes the burdensome "ratio relief" process and rejects claims that merit shop contractors seek "cheap labor," emphasizing that they provide competitive wages and benefits.



[Christopher Fryxell, President Associated Builders & Contractors](#): Reforming the apprenticeship hiring restriction in Connecticut will lead to significant benefits. It will create thousands of jobs by allowing contractors to hire more apprentices, addressing labor shortages. This change will also enhance workforce training by providing more career opportunities for residents eager to enter skilled trades. A larger, well-trained workforce will help modernize infrastructure by completing critical projects more efficiently. Additionally, unlocking apprenticeship opportunities will boost the economy by enabling more people to pursue stable, high-paying careers in the construction industry.

[Jim Gildea, President, ManufactureCT](#): Allowing more apprentices to work in the field will strengthen the trades sector, which has a significant economic impact, benefiting local businesses and communities. The author, who began their career through an apprenticeship, emphasizes that hands-on experience is essential for skill development. Based on personal experience as both an apprentice and a licensed professional, they affirm that a 1:1 apprentice-to-license ratio is sufficient for both training and safety.

[Samantha Grela, Secretary, Grela Well Drilling](#): "I am in support of changing the existing ratio of journey persons to apprentices as our industry does not have a significant amount of journey persons for small companies to meet the current requirements. By making the ration 1:1 we would be offering more people into the field which desperately needs the new comers."

Eighty-five individuals have submitted written testimony that states the following: The 3:1 journeyman-to-apprentice ratio creates a barrier for aspiring electricians, delaying their field experience and limiting opportunities. The difficulty in finding sponsors forces many apprentices to drop out or seek work in other states. This restriction contributes to low apprenticeship completion rates and fails to address the growing shortage of skilled electricians as experienced workers retire. This shortage affects not just contractors but also homeowners, businesses, and municipalities. HB 6786 proposes a 1:1 ratio, offering a practical solution that would create more opportunities, provide better training experiences, and ensure a stronger workforce for Connecticut's future.

[Here is the link to the testimony:](#)

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

[Kristen Abrahamson, Executive Vice President, Mechanical Contractors Association of Connecticut INC \(MCAC\)](#): The MCAC opposes House Bill 6786, arguing that Connecticut's current apprentice-to-journeyperson ratio has been effective in ensuring high-quality construction, worker safety, and proper training. They contend that the bill's proposed 1:1 ratio would reduce supervision, increase safety risks, and lower construction quality. MCAC highlights that contractors can already apply for ratio relief through the Department of Labor if needed. They also cite studies showing that first-year workers are at higher risk of injury, stressing the importance of close oversight. Additionally, they warn that changing the ratio could lead to project delays, budget overruns, and exploitation of apprentices.

[Paul Costello, Director of Apprenticeship & Training](#): He emphasizes that the current ratio exists to ensure apprentices receive proper supervision and training, as not all journeypersons are equipped to be effective instructors. He points to past data showing that reducing the ratio negatively impacted apprenticeship quality and highlights the existing Ratio Relief process, which addresses situations where employers need more apprentices. He also counters claim of a skilled labor shortage, presenting data showing a 205% increase in new licensed electricians since 2008 and that many sponsors can hire more apprentices within the current ratio. He argues that changes to the ratio should be data-driven, not based on general claims, and that workforce concerns should be addressed by improving existing systems like the Ratio Relief process. He urges the committee to reject the bill, stressing the importance of maintaining training quality and workplace safety.

[Bill Finch, Director, Connecticut Labor Management Cooperations Committee](#): He thanks the General Assembly for their interest in increasing the number of electricians but argues against lowering the hiring ratios for apprentices. He emphasizes that changing the ratios will not solve the electrician shortage, as recent unemployment rates for electricians are high, and current apprentices face delays in completing their training. He points out that the current 3:1 ratio has worked effectively for over 100 years, delivering high-quality construction safely and within budget. He suggests improving the existing Ratio Relief Process for flexibility but warn that lowering the ratio could lead to apprentices being unemployed without enough work, potentially displacing licensed electricians, and causing safety and quality issues on job sites. He also argues that reducing the ratio could lead to exploitation of apprentices by unscrupulous contractors. Ultimately, he advocates for supporting the construction industry's growth to create more work, which would naturally increase the demand for apprentices.

One hundred eighty five individuals have submitted form letters in opposition of this bill that says they oppose changing the apprenticeship ratio from 3:1 to 1:1, arguing it would harm job quality, productivity, and safety. A 3:1 ratio allows apprentices to learn from multiple journeymen, while a 1:1 ratio would limit exposure to different skills and perspectives, reducing training quality. Lowering the ratio prioritizes short-term labor availability over long-term skill development, leading to a shortage of highly skilled tradespeople. It could also drive down wages, increase turnover, and lower craftsmanship standards. Additionally, construction is physically demanding and dangerous; fewer journeymen per apprentice would reduce supervision, increasing workplace accidents. Given the extensive training required for electricians, the writer urges a no vote on the proposed ratio change. [Here's the link for the testimonies.](#)

**Reported by: Austin Adil**

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