

# Government Administration and Elections Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No:** SB-471 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF APPRENTICES ON PREVAILING WAGE

**Title:** PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS.

**Vote Date:** 3/23/2026

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/13/2026

**File No.:**

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### SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Government Administration and Elections Committee

### REASONS FOR BILL:

There has been concerns that apprentices are not being paid the prevailing wage on public works projects and this bill is to ensure that is not the case. Also the bill is trying to encourage the use of apprentices on state contracted projects and would help with the apprentice shortage.

### SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):

Clarifies that DOL must adopt the amount of payment, contributions, and member benefits at the journeyman rate

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

#### **Garrett Eucalitto, Commissioner, Department of Transportation**

Commissioner Eucalitto supports the goal of increasing apprenticeship use but raises significant concerns with the bill as written. The requirement that 15% of work hours be performed by apprentices would be difficult for contractors to meet, requiring substantial time and resources to recruit and train workers. This could lead to fewer qualified bidders, more waiver requests, project delays, and higher costs. CTDOT also warns the mandate may conflict with federal regulations governing federally funded projects, which require open, nondiscriminatory bidding and awarding contracts to the lowest responsible bidder. Because many CTDOT projects rely on federal funding, the agency is concerned the bill could jeopardize funding eligibility and requests revisions to ensure compliance with federal law.

**Michelle Gilman, Commissioner, Department of Administrative Services**

Commissioner Gilman states that this bill requires contractors and subcontractors on public works projects over ten million dollars to use registered apprentices for a minimum percentage of total on-site labor hours. These requirements phase in over three years—5%, 10%, and 15%—and apply to each contractor individually. DAS supports the bill's intent to strengthen Connecticut's skilled workforce pipeline by encouraging greater use of apprentices on major public works projects. Apprentice programs are vital to sustaining the trades workforce. They provide structured, hand-on training, create pathways to sustaining careers and ensure that Connecticut maintains a robust pipeline of trained workers.

**Dante Bartolomeo, Commissioner, Department of Labor**

CTDOL raises serious concerns about implementation, cost, and feasibility of the bill. Key concerns are legal conflicts with the bill references statutes that conflict with existing prevailing wage laws, creating inconsistency in enforcement; High resource demands are Mandating apprenticeship participation (currently voluntary) would require significant new staffing, training, and funding, which are not in the budget; the bill will expanded the scope, including many new entities (contractors, subcontractors, etc.) would create a large increase in enforcement workload and backlog. Mr. Bartolomeo states the bill would reduce competition, requiring prior apprenticeship program completion would limit eligible bidders. There would also be new responsibilities added, assigning CTDOL roles in waivers, "good faith" determinations, hearings, and disqualifications would add complex, time-consuming duties outside current operations, and there appears to be redundancy/conflicts with some penalties and disqualification provisions duplicate existing laws. Recommendations from DOL are to delay implementation, remove or revise burdensome provisions, and align with existing statutes to avoid major fiscal and operational impacts.

**Tanya Hughes, Executive Director, CHRO**

Ms. Hughes testifies that CHRO supports Section 4 of S.B. 469, which requires analyzing the impact of privatization on protected classes, saying it helps prevent inequities and promotes fair decision-making. However, CHRO opposes Section 5, which raises the threshold for waiving competitive bidding from \$10,000 to \$25,000. It argues this would allow more contracts to bypass competition, favor established vendors, and reduce opportunities for small and minority-owned businesses, worsening existing disparities. Overall, CHRO supports the bill's equity-focused privatization provisions but warns the bidding change would undermine fair and inclusive contracting.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

**Joseph Ambrosini, Business Manager, LIUNA Local 665**

Mr. Ambrosini testifies that he is in support, with amendments to Section (d). Section (d) lines 93-96 add the words 'at the journeyman rate'. This will allow registered apprentices a fair benefit and wage and levels the playing field in their favor when it comes to contractors bidding on prevailing wage projects. The Laborers' International uses this benchmark in their certified apprentice program. To allow nonunion contractors to undercut their apprentices with below journeyman benefits and wages is to give them a huge advantage against union contractors.

**Nate Brown, Business Manager, Operating Engineers Local 478**

Mr. Brown testifies that the apprenticeship program IUOE offers is considered the 'gold standard' that allows apprentices to earn while they learn, with the completion of a four-year apprenticeship giving the full journeyman rates and benefits. IUOE supports this bill with the additional of language in Section (d), lines 93-96. The language would be 'at the journeyman rate' to assure apprentices are paid appropriately and not arbitrarily driving down their fringe benefits.

**Richard Cellar, Local 33 HFIAW**

Mr. Cellar states that this will help reinforce the importance of using legitimate, state-registered apprenticeship programs on prevailing wage public works projects. Ensuring that contractors participate in these programs and actively train apprentices helps support workforce development while maintaining the high standards expected on taxpayer funded projects. He supports the bill with amended language in Section (d), lines 93-96 to include the words 'at the journeyman rate'. This would help clarify the statute and ensure that apprentices on prevailing wage projects are compensated properly within the framework of the law. Clear statutory language strengthens enforcement, reduces confusion in the field, and helps protect the integrity of both prevailing wage standards and registered apprenticeship programs.

**Michael Colombo, President/Business Manager, SMART Local Union 38**

Mr. Colombo explains that prevailing wage laws exist to ensure that public construction projects are performed under fair and lawful labor standards. Those standards include not only proper wage classifications, but also the appropriate use of registered apprentices within the construction workforce. SMART supports this bill with the addition of language in Section (d), Lines 93-96. He recommends adding the words 'at the journeyman rate' which will provide important clarity and help to ensure apprentices are compensated appropriately within the prevailing wage framework.

**Mark Davidson, Political Director-Business Rep, IUPAT District Rep Council 11**

Mr. Davidson recalls his days as a painting apprentice and how the program changed his life. Having full benefits gave him a pathway to the future and kept him pressing forward to complete the program and go on to a career in the craft. The IUPAT supports this bill with the addition of language in Section (d), lines 93-96 to include 'at the journeyman rate'. This assures clarification in the statute to prevent the current interpretation that allows for reduced fringe benefit payment for apprentices on the prevailing wage projects.

**Joseph Fazzino, Representttive, IUPAT District Council 11**

Mr. Fazzino testifies that SB 471 strengthens workforce development and accountability on prevailing wage public works projects by requiring contractors to participate in state-registered apprenticeship programs and show they are graduating apprentices. It aims to prevent misuse of the "apprentice" classification, ensuring workers receive proper training and legal wage protections while supporting legitimate programs. He supports this bill as a step toward improving compliance and training standards, but a small amendment is recommended. Adding "at the journeyman rate" to the wage language would clarify how apprentice pay is calculated, reduce confusion, and strengthen enforcement. Overall, the bill promotes stronger apprenticeship systems and fair labor practices, with a minor clarification to improve implementation.

**Bill Finch, CT Labor Management Cooperation Committee**

Mr. Finch highlights the value of the NECA and IBEW Joint Apprenticeship Training Centers (JATCs), which provide five years of free, high-quality training funded through union payroll deductions. They emphasize that these programs produce a skilled workforce that benefits Connecticut's economy and taxpayers without costing the taxpayers any money. He supports maintaining strong apprenticeship standards and urge careful consideration of any changes. Specifically, he recommends amending SB 471 to clarify wage language by adding "at the journeyman rate," ensuring apprentices are properly compensated under the prevailing wage system and reducing potential confusion.

**Kevin Guertin, JATC Trustee, Roofers & Waterproofers Local 12**

Mr. Guertin testifies that SB 417 reinforces the importance of registered apprenticeship programs. These programs play a critical role in developing the skilled workforce needed to build and maintain Connecticut's infrastructure. We also believe that this bill presents an opportunity to clarify how apprentices are paid. We ask that the words 'at the journeyman rate' be added in Section (d), lines 93-96.

**Jordan Stillman, Immediate Past President, CT Heating – Cooling Contractors**

Mr. Stillman supports SB 471's goal of expanding opportunities for registered apprentices on public works projects, emphasizing that hands-on experience is key to developing the skilled trades workforce and addressing labor shortages. However, they caution that existing state limits on how many apprentices contractors can hire may prevent the bill from being fully effective. If contractors are expected to use more apprentices, they must also be allowed to hire more. CHCC urges policymakers to align apprenticeship requirements with reforms to hiring restrictions, ensuring contractors have the flexibility needed to train the next generation of workers.

**Joelyn Leon, Director, Foundation for Fair Contracting**

Mr. Leon supports SB 471 to strengthen workforce development and accountability on prevailing wage public works projects. By requiring contractors to use state-registered apprenticeship programs and show they are graduating apprentices, the bill ensures public funds support proper training. It also addresses concerns about workers being mislabeled as apprentices without receiving required training, which can lead to misclassification and wage violations. Overall, the bill is seen as a positive step, but the Foundation recommends clarifying how apprentice wage rates are applied under prevailing wage law to improve implementation. FFC also asks for a clarification in Section (d) lines 93-96 by adding the words 'at the journeyman's rate'. This will assure the correct classification and payment for all apprentices.

**Jay More, Business Agent, Plumbers & Pipefitters UA Local 777**

Mr. More supports SB 471 to strengthen workforce development and accountability on prevailing wage public works projects. By requiring contractors to use state-registered apprenticeship programs and show they are graduating apprentices, the bill ensures public funds support proper training. It also addresses concerns about workers being mislabeled as apprentices without receiving required training, which can lead to misclassification and wage violations. Overall, the bill is seen as a positive step, but the Foundation recommends clarifying how apprentice wage rates are applied under prevailing wage law to improve implementation. FFC also asks for a clarification in Section (d) lines 93-96 by adding the words 'at the journeyman's rate'. This will assure the correct classification and payment for all

apprentices. Clear statutory language helps prevent misunderstandings in the field and strengthens enforcement of law.

**Marc Okun, Regional Manager, NASRCC**

Mr. Okun explains that SB 471 corrects an imbalance in workforce development by requiring contractors on publicly funded projects to participate in apprenticeship training. While some contractors already invest in training, others do not, and the bill ensures broader responsibility across the industry. It emphasizes that Connecticut has invested heavily in workforce and education programs, and apprenticeships are an alternative “earn-while-you-learn” pathway that depends on real jobsite opportunities. The main issue is not lack of interest in trades, but lack of access to those opportunities. By tying apprenticeship requirements to public construction projects, the bill creates needed training opportunities and ensures taxpayers see a return on their investment in workforce development.

**Bret Wells, Business Manager, Ironworkers Local 15**

In his testimony Mr. Wells supports apprenticeship training on prevailing wage public works projects, emphasizing that these projects provide essential hands-on experience under skilled supervision. Programs like the Iron Workers Local 15 apprenticeship represent major investments in workforce development, funded by employer contributions rather than taxpayers. A key concern is protecting apprentice fringe benefits, which fund training, safety, healthcare, and retirement. Weakening these benefits would undermine apprenticeship programs and workforce quality. He recommends clarifying wage language by adding “at the journeyman rate” to ensure proper compensation. Overall, it supports strengthening apprenticeships while preserving the funding and structure that ensure a safe, highly skilled construction workforce.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Paul Amarone, Senior Policy Director, CBIA**

Mr. Amarone states that while the business community strongly supports workforce development and the expansion of apprenticeship opportunities in the trades, we respectfully oppose the bill as drafted due to significant concerns regarding workforce availability, contractor participation, and the unintended consequences this mandate may have on public construction projects in Connecticut. Requiring every contractor and subcontractor on large public works projects to meet fixed apprentice hour requirements assumes that enough apprentices exist across all trades and regions of the state. Unfortunately, that is not always the case. The rigid, fixed apprentice requirement required each contractor and subcontractor to independently meet the threshold rather than measuring compliance across the project. Smaller or specialty subcontractors typically do not maintain their own apprenticeship programs, and this would penalize smaller companies for noncompliance unnecessarily causing the pool of eligible bidders to shrink. The additional layers of administrative burdens will be seen by agencies such as DOL which could delay projects and increase administrative costs without achieving the intended workforce development.

**Christopher Fryxell, President, CT ABC**

Mr. Fryxell argues that before adding new apprenticeship requirements to public works projects, Connecticut must first fix restrictive hiring rules. Current law limits how many apprentices contractors can hire, including a 3-to-1 journeyman-to-apprentice ratio after the first three apprentices, even though supervision is already 1-to-1. Recent reforms (Public

Act 25-47) only helped smaller contractors, leaving larger projects still constrained. The speaker contends that these limits hinder workforce development and reduce opportunities for new apprentices. They argue that expanding apprenticeship mandates without removing hiring restrictions is counterproductive. Instead, the state should eliminate outdated ratios to grow the workforce pipeline and better support apprenticeship programs.

**Allie Rinaldi, Executive Director, IEC New England**

Mr. Rinaldo opposes SB 471, arguing it could have unintended negative impacts on both apprentices and contractors. It criticizes the bill as too vague, noting it does not clearly define which projects are covered or how requirements will be determined. A key concern is that the bill treats all trades the same, despite differences—particularly that licensed trades face strict limits on hiring apprentices, unlike others. The required increase in apprentice participation may be unrealistic given these constraints. The testimony also warns that steep penalties for noncompliance could financially harm contractors, especially during workforce shortages. Overall, it urges lawmakers to reject the bill and pursue more flexible, trade-specific approaches to workforce development.

**Don Shubert, President, CCIA**

Mr. Shubert states CCIA supports apprenticeship training and workforce development but opposes SB 471 due to practical concerns. The bill would require contractors to meet phased apprenticeship hour quotas (up to 15%) and imposes penalties for noncompliance. CCIA argues the state lacks the administrative capacity to enforce the mandate and that the waiver process is unrealistic, since apprentice availability cannot be predicted at the time of bidding. They also note that many programs lack the capacity to meet the required percentages, especially smaller or specialized trades. Additional concerns include inappropriate requirements for construction managers and severe penalties that could disqualify contractors, reduce competition, and shrink the pool of bidders on public projects.

**Reported by: Cindy Panioto**

**Date: 3/31/26**