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Date: Jan 12, 2022, 9:47 PM -0500

Subject: H157 Testimony

Chair Stevens and Members of the House Committee on General, Housing and Military Affairs,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Tuesday regarding H.157, An Act Relating to the Registration of Construction Contractors.

In summary...

Last year, on behalf of the more than 10,000 licensed and certified tradespeople people in Vermont, I asked the Senate Economic Development Committee to remove the words "**heating, plumbing, electrical**" from the House passed version of H.157. It was and still is our contention that it is unnecessarily duplicative. These highly skilled, licensed and certified individuals already have a registry kept by the Department of Public Safety, Division of Fire Safety which is listed on the DFS website and updated by DFS staff. Maintaining a second list at the Vermont Office of Professional Regulation (OPR) adds another layer of regulation and cost by a second state agency for these licensed and certified tradespersons

Further, it would create a false impression that individuals registered with OPR as heating, plumbing, or electrical contractors are qualified to perform such work. It takes years of training to become a heating/plumbing/electrical contractor and these tradespersons must maintain their licenses and certifications with continuing education. Just as we don't allow someone to claim to be a lawyer or a doctor without a license to practice law or medicine, we should not allow anyone to claim they are qualified to work on heating, plumbing or electrical systems. And, in my opinion, we should not pass legislation that requires a government agency to help facilitate these claims.

That said, there is merit to the compromise brokered by Senator Sirotkin and Lauren Hibbert of the Office of Professional Regulation last year. It does eliminate the duplicative registry by exempting tradespersons who licensed and certified by the Department of Public Safety, Division of Fire Safety. While it does not prevent someone from claiming they are a heating, plumbing, or electrical contractor on the OPR registry, I recognize that it may provide an educational opportunity. Anyone who purchases a listing on the OPR registry claiming to be a heating, plumbing, or electrical contractor can now be identified and contacted by my organization (and other schools that teach skilled trades) to explain what is necessary to obtain license and certification as a Vermont heating, plumbing, or electrical contractor.

Again, thank you for the opportunity and I am happy to answer any questions from the committee.

Matt Cota

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