

February 18, 2026

Members of the House General Committee.

I humbly apologize to you all for not being in attendance today, an issue arose on Monday that couldn't be rescheduled. Again I apologize...

My name is Richard Wobby, and I am writing on behalf of the Associated General Contractors of Vermont. We also represent the Vermont Independent Electrical Contractors Association, Vermont Timber Framers, Vermont Redi-Mix and Vermont's Project Roadsafe. Together, these organizations speak for more than 210 contractors and industry partners across Vermont, including general contractors, independent electrical contractors, material suppliers, equipment companies, insurers, bonding companies, and lenders. Our members generate close to three quarters of a billion dollars in annual revenue and employ more than 10,500 Vermonters who build and maintain the infrastructure this state relies on every day.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer our perspective on House Bill 459 and the proposed changes to the Parental and Family Leave Act.

Let me start by saying clearly that our members care deeply about their employees. We understand that people face important moments in their lives when they need time away from work. Supporting workers is not the issue. The challenge is how these changes play out on the ground in industries like construction and electrical contracting, where work is seasonal, schedules are tight, and skilled workers are not easily replaced.

The bill proposes 12 weeks of unpaid leave along with expanded bereavement leave. For many Vermont employers, especially mid-sized companies like the ones that make up much of AGC/VT and VIECA membership, this creates real workforce stability concerns. When even one employee is out for an extended period during peak construction season, projects may be delayed and costs may rise. When several employees take leave at the same time, meeting contractual obligations can become extremely difficult.

Most Vermont contractors do not have a large pool of specialized workers waiting on the sidelines. These trades require training and experience, and in many cases the person doing the work cannot simply be swapped out. Temporary workers are rare, expensive when they exist, and often unfamiliar with the safety and quality standards our members must meet.

Another concern is the reduction in flexibility. Today, employees and employers often work together to find solutions that fit the situation. This might mean intermittent leave, reduced hours, or a combination of paid and unpaid time. These conversations allow employees to take the time they need while still helping the employer keep a project moving. A rigid structure makes it harder for both sides to craft what works best for them. Construction and electrical work require significant advance planning, coordination among multiple companies, and predictable staffing. When someone is out long-term, employers often need to reassign specialized workers, extend timelines, absorb

productivity losses, and carry additional administrative and financial burdens. For many mid-sized firms, these pressures are difficult to absorb and can affect their ability to stay competitive and keep people employed year-round.

We fully support protecting workers during important family and personal events. What we ask is that the Committee take a balanced approach that protects employees while also reflecting the operational realities that Vermont businesses face. Flexibility is essential. One size does not fit all when it comes to leave, especially in industries already strained by workforce shortages.

Thank you for your time and for considering the perspective of the construction and electrical contracting industries. We respectfully ask the Committee to consider adjustments to H.459 or postpone action so that a more workable approach can be developed. Our goal is a policy that supports employees while ensuring Vermont businesses can continue to operate safely and deliver the infrastructure projects our communities depend on.

I am happy to answer any questions or provide testimony about how this bill may affect our members at a later date and how we might consider alternatives.

Thank you,
RJW



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Associated General Contractors of Vermont