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June 26, 2018

Rep. Ron Young, Chair
House Economic Development, Commerce and Labor Committee
77 S. High St
13th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Re: House Bill 551

Dear Chairman Young and Members of the House Economic Development, Commerce and Labor Committee:

The Mechanical Contractors Association of Ohio (MCAO) is a coalition of Plumbing, Piping, HVAC, and Sheet Metal Contractors that strive to promote legislation and regulations that will have a beneficial impact to the construction industry as a whole and to organized specialty trade contractors.

On behalf of MCAO and our members, I would respectfully ask that the committee consider removing construction occupations from the provisions of House Bill 551. While we firmly believe that workforce development opportunities for minors can be invaluable learning experiences and extremely important to developing highly skilled, in-demand workers, we cannot support the proposed legislation as it applies to the construction industry.

There are multitude of legal and practical reasons why this type of work experience for minors would not work well in the construction industry. Hands-on training is extremely valuable in developing the skills to be an excellent craftsman, but for good reason, jobsite experience for high school students is not legal. Jobsites can be highly dangerous and the consequences of a mistake or accident can be lifelong. We do not believe that House Bill 551, as currently drafted, adequately accounts for those dangers.

MCAO and its members truly appreciate the value of work experience and in promoting our industry to young people and new entrants. We strongly support vocational education at the high school level and are always eager to educate students on the value of a career in the construction trades. However, we cannot support House Bill 551, as currently drafted, as a safe manner for attracting that new talent. We are happy to work with the committee and the interested parties for way to respect the legislative intent of the bill while ensuring that our members can maintain safe jobsites.

Thank you for consideration and please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Valerie Pope", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Valerie Pope
Executive Director