



Occupational Licensing Board Review Testimony Ohio Construction Industry Licensing Board

House State & Local Government Committee October 9, 2019

Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair Ginter, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide information on the Ohio Construction Industry Licensing Board. My name is Carol Ross and I am the Executive Secretary of the Board.

The Ohio Construction Industry Licensing Board ("Board") was established in 1993 to oversee the licensure of commercial specialty contractors. The specialty trades licensed by the Board include individuals working as a heating, ventilating, and air conditioning, refrigeration, plumbing, hydronics and electrical contractors. The primary goal and objective of the Board is to promote the safety of the public, those working in the specialty trades, as well as those working in the construction industry generally, by verifying that individuals working in the "licensed trades" have sufficient education, training, and experience to ensure that the work performed in these trades is done properly and competently.

The seventeen-member board issues approximately 18,000 licenses to roughly 13,000 specialty contractors working in the "licensed trades." As part of its licensing function, the Board investigates complaints made against licensees as well as cases where an individual is performing work without the required license and, thereafter, conducting disciplinary proceedings should an infraction be found. The Board also approves and renews third-party, independent training agencies that offer continuing education programming for those licensed in the specialty trades, as well as approves the specific courses offered by these training agencies.

Although the Board is part of the operating function of the Ohio Department of Commerce's Division of Industrial Compliance, the Board does have a dedicated staff of six office employees and four investigators working in the field. The Board also shares responsibilities with other licensing and inspection service boards within the Department to increase efficiency and reduce indirect costs.

In order to obtain a license as a commercial contractor in the specialty trades, an applicant must meet several requirements, including: 1) be at least eighteen years of age; 2) successfully pass a criminal background check; 3) not have obtained or renewed a license issued pursuant to Chapter 4740 of the Revised Code by fraud, misrepresentation, or deception; 4) not have engaged in fraud, misrepresentation, or deception in the conduct of business; and 5) have sufficient education, training, or experience to perform work in the licensed trade safely and competently. The Board also considers Veterans who performed these duties in the military but do not have proof of the specific requirements. These criteria strike the appropriate balance to ensure that applicants are competent to perform the work while not overly restricting the pool of

available workers in the field. An applicant for licensure must also pay the applicable fees and pass the examination in their desired trade. The examination fee is \$25 and the initial licensure fee is also \$25. Licensees must pay a renewal fee of \$60 per year for their license and pass eight hours of continuing education.

In addition to licensing specialty contractors, the Board also approves and renews training agencies that offer continuing education programming for those licensed in the specialty trades, as well as approves the specific courses offered by these training agencies. Currently, the Board has approved 275 third-party, independent training agencies. Each training agency pays an annual fee of \$25 as well as \$10 per course offered plus \$1 per credit hour per attendee.

According to the National Association of State Contractors Licensing Agencies, 47 states license specialty trades similar to those trades subject to the Board's jurisdiction. Because other states are generally comparable to the amount of regulation exercised by the Board, the Board has entered into reciprocity agreements with six states that issue licenses in specialty trades, including Kentucky, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Louisiana, and Tennessee.

In summary, the trades specifically regulated by the Board require exceptional levels of knowledge and expertise and the underlying works plays a tremendous role in the overall safety of occupants of the regulated commercial projects. Having minimum requirements to obtain licensure in the licensed trades helps to ensure that those working in those fields have sufficient education, training, and experience to perform such work competently and safely. Therefore, I ask you to please support the continued licensure under the Ohio Construction Industry Licensing Board.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to present information on this board, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.