



## SPECIALTY CONTRACTORS COALITION



### Protect Ohio Homeowners - Support SB142

Chairman Rulli, Vice Chair Lang, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Small Business and Economic Opportunity Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present proponent testimony on Senate Bill 142.

My name is Rocco Fana, Jr. I am the executive director for the Air Conditioning Contractors of Ohio (ACCO) and Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors of Ohio (PHCC Ohio).

On behalf of ACCO, PHCC Ohio and consumers around the State of Ohio, I am asking for your support for SB 142 for the specialty trades (Plumbing-HVAC-Electrical). Licensing requirements should be extended to residential construction for the same reason they are already applied to commercial construction: because the health and safety of Ohioans depend on it.

Simply put, unlicensed activity is a threat to public safety. Improperly installed plumbing, HVAC and electrical systems increase chances of mold growth, flooding, house fires, legionella outbreaks, carbon monoxide poisoning, cross-contamination of potable water and wastewater, explosions, and other potential catastrophes.

According to the Ohio Construction Industry Licensing Board (OCILB), 8 out of 10 consumer complaints received each week are from homeowners who have issues with unlicensed residential contractors. Unlicensed contractors are less likely to apply for the necessary permits to perform needed work, which means they are more likely to perform work outside of building code requirements; thus, their work is less likely to be inspected and certified. Adhering to building codes assures the safety and integrity of a dwelling. Licensed professionals are most familiar with building codes because knowledge of these codes is an essential part of their continuing education and training, and contractors are tested on their knowledge when they sit for a licensing exam.

The acquisition of a license in any profession demonstrates competency in a skillset that can only be mastered through intensive training and education. In a specialty trade such as plumbing and HVAC, licensed professionals have undergone a 4-5 year apprenticeship curriculum that includes hands-on training and classroom instruction prior to sitting for a licensing examination, ensuring a baseline fitness to perform complex work where the health and safety of the public is at stake. Once their apprenticeship is complete, they continue training and education on the job for the length of their career.

This is an issue of health, safety, and welfare of Ohio's homeowners. They are the ones at risk if equipment is improperly installed. Building codes are in place to ensure consumers

are getting a safe, proper installation. Without licensing and permitting, the safety of a dwelling cannot be assured.

In December 2019 we asked our members (over 300 licensed professional HVAC and plumbing contractors) to send a short survey their customers on the importance of licensing. Through today, we have received 355 responses.

- Do you feel safer knowing your contractor is licensed?
  - 97% said yes (343 of 353)
- Is it important for a contractor to have a license to work in your home?
  - 94% said yes (334 of 355)
- Did you know that only commercial contractors - not residential (plumbing, HVAC and electrical) are required to have a license in the State of Ohio?
  - 75% said no (266 of 353)

Every Ohio resident – including everyone on this committee - uses plumbing, heating, cooling and electricity in their homes and offices in their daily lives. As public servants, you have a responsibility to promote and enforce policies, such as licensing requirements for residential contractors, to ensure the homes of all Ohioans are safe places to live.

Thank you once again, Chairman Rulli, and the members of the committee, for the opportunity to present this issue to you today. I will be happy to answer any questions you might have of me.

Rocco Fana, Jr.  
Executive Director