

INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS



LOCAL 99

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Honorable Representative Joseph J. Solomon, Jr. /Chairman
House Corporations Committee
HouseCorporations@rilegislature.gov
State House
Providence, RI

January 25, 2024

RE: Support of H-7015 AN ACT RELATING TO BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONS -- ELECTRICIANS

Dear Chairman Solomon,

As Business Manager of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Union 99, I represent 800 Women and Men who provide their skills for our signatory contractors in the Electrical Industry in the State of Rhode Island and nearby Massachusetts. I also am one, if not the only, voice for the men and women in the industry who are not yet fortunate enough to be represented by an electrical labor union in the State of Rhode Island.

I wish to express our **strong Support of H-7015** for the following reasons:

This bill simply clarifies what is already well understood by the regulatory authority and those who choose to comply with the existing law. It has become evident over the past several years that as opportunities are created, technology changes and a licensed industry looks a bit different. There are those who wish to capitalize on these changes without making any of the commitments every licensed electrician, contractor inspector, and registered apprentice has.

The electrical industry came into practical existence in the early 1800's. Since the time of crude batteries to today's Sodium Reactors and micro grids, the industry has evolved constantly and there is no end in sight. In 1942, the State of Rhode Island passed into law reasonable and logical licensing requirements for this work. These license laws are designed to ensure the utmost safety of the worker, the customer, and the public and ensure proper installation of work. Those laws worked then and they continue to work today.

In addition, as the automated and renewable industries have blossomed, old technologies have faded away and new technologies have been introduced into the industry, but the law still applies as it always has. Simply because the work appears to be different to the untrained eye, does not erase the requirement to comply with the law. The same requirements as well as all the same risks are still present.

At the Department of Labor level, there have been repeated situations where local and foreign entities, without Rhode Island electrical licenses, have claimed they "have heard" they can use unskilled temporary help to perform work covered under the electrical license laws of Rhode Island. Those entities are subsequently served with violations and then subject to the fines as set forward in statute. It appears that human nature is to hear just what you wish and then stop listening. By clarifying the statute, we will prevent the lowering of standards and continue to keep the worker, the customer, and the public free from harm by unskilled workers.

In conclusion, it is not difficult for everyone to comply with the law, some just chose not to for their own reasons. The two main governing bodies of the industry, The Board of Examiners of Electricians for the State of Rhode Island and the Rhode Island Department of Labor, agree on the language and support this bill. We respectfully request **passage of H-7015** for the good of the general public and the men and women trained to perform this work.

Sincerely,

Joseph L. Walsh, Jr.

CC: Esteemed Committee Members
Paul Macdonald / Lobbyist
RI AFL-CIO
BuildRI
Rhode Island Building and Construction Trades

