



3100 Humboldt Ave S
Minneapolis, MN 55408

March 17, 2021

Letter in support of HF 1270

Chair Long and Members of the Climate & Energy Finance and Policy Committee,

The Electrical Association is very supportive of energy efficiency, strategic electrification, and the Conservation Improvement Plan. As an association we represent over 400 electrical contractors and electrical employers throughout the state of Minnesota. We provide members and nonmembers with continuing education and apprenticeship education for merit shop contractors. We exist for the betterment of the electrical industry and have been doing this work for over 90 years.

Our members would be interested in hiring participants from this training center. Aside from our membership, there are 2200 electrical contractors and 500 electrical employers located in Minnesota whom also may feel similarly. Most of our members are busy and not realizing unemployment as seen in the union sector.

This pandemic has been really unfair picking winners and losers, and construction sectors are not immune to this effect. Residential construction continues to be strong as people working in their homes look to use their houses differently, or even equipping their vacation homes to be more permanent. Meanwhile, large businesses take a pause as their offices remain empty causing lags in commercial construction. Our members spend more time working in people's homes providing electrical services than the union sector.

There is a skills shortage in the electrical industry. My members continue to approach me looking for journeymen and I know of no journeymen looking for work. I've also heard that the average age of a journeyman electrician is 55. I don't know how to validate this, but if it is true we're in trouble. It takes 4-5 years to grow an apprentice from entry level to journeyman status. The current pass rate of the JW test is 40% after those 4 years of experience. We are limited to 2 apprentices for every journeyman on site. We can't just throw people at this problem. We need to train and retain them. It's a marathon not a sprint and we need to start now!

It is no secret that the electrical industry is composed largely of white males. Last week the Electrical Association celebrated Women in Construction by focusing on a female electrician each day of the week. It was challenging identifying possible participants. The social media campaign was successful and very positively received.

Empowering Contractors



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If I had to do the same thing for people of color it would be even more challenging. I know one black contractor. I know one Latinx contractor. While I'm certain Asian contractors exist, I don't know one.

I grew up in a household that placed a high value on working with your hands and using tools, and my father had many tools and a shop at his disposal. My high school had a phenomenal shop program with access to an automotive shop, small engines, woodworking shop both construction and millwork, metalwork and machining shop, CAD, residential wiring, electronics, plastics, welding bay, and masonry. It is easy for me to forget that an individual growing up in an apartment does not have any of that exposure to the trades.

It would be wonderful if the citizens of Minneapolis and St. Paul would be able to see electricians that look like themselves installing roof top solar, load management receivers, battery storage, and other energy efficiency technology in their homes, workplaces, schools and places of worship. Investing in this training center will assist in making that happen.

Best regards,

Michelle Dreier
Government Affairs Manager
Electrical Association