



**Plumbing, Heating, and Cooling Contractors
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Don Conway
President

March 11, 2019

John Bifulco
Vice President

Via E-mail

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Nick Hartcorn
2nd Vice President

Re: Need for State-Level Plumbing Licensing Requirements

Ron Doughty
Treasurer

Dear Governor Cuomo:

Thomas Blacharski
Secretary

I am the President of the Plumbing, Heating, Cooling Contractors of Long Island, Inc. (“PHCCLI”). PHCC is a national organization representing thousands of licensed plumbing and HVAC contractors throughout the country for over 100 years. The PHCC promotes higher-quality work and safety, as well as offers continuing education, utility/manufacturer training on equipment, apprenticeship programs, updates regarding developments in the industry, marketing information, business management instruction, workers’ compensation coverage, and other valuable services to its members. Locally, the PHCCLI additionally performs numerous public education and public service functions. These include participating in construction of several homes on Long Island together with Habitat for Humanity and the Stephen Stiller Tunnel to Towers Foundation. The work performed on these homes is done by our members who volunteer their time and expertise in the plumbing and HVAC fields. The PHCCLI also sponsors exhibitions at Scout events and school career events.

Joseph Cornetta
Past President

John DeLillo
Executive Director

I write to congratulate you and your Democratic Party colleagues on your recent elections and on gaining a majority in both houses of the New York State legislature. I also wish to apprise you of the PHCCLI’s efforts to establish a state-wide licensing requirement, and its hope that a now-united New York State government might be willing to promote this goal.

Allison Wieland
Deputy Director

Patrick Sullivan
Counsel

PHCCLI and the PHCC of New York State have sought a comprehensive state license for two decades for the following reasons:

First, at present, and using Nassau County as an example, a licensed plumber who seeks to provide service throughout Nassau must apply for and obtain licenses for 3 towns, 42 villages and 2 cities, all within Nassau County, which has approximate dimensions of fifteen miles from North to South and from East to West. In contrast, there is one plumbing license for all of New York City, and one license for the much larger and less populous Westchester County. Over 40 states in the country have

a unified statewide license. Pennsylvania is on the doorstep of its goal of establishing a state license. Included as an attachment to this e-mail is a *Newsday* column by Dan Janison from several years ago that chronicles some of PHCCLI's efforts up to that point to obtain merely a county-wide license, and the challenges it continues to face.

Second, a statewide plumbing license will level the playing field for testing and other requirements necessary to obtain a plumbing license. In Long Island alone, the testing needed to obtain a certificate of competency in plumbing varies from town to town and village to village. The lack of a unified licensed plumbing exam is confusing to young people entering the field. The testing is regulated by examining boards within each municipality, and with no comprehensive program.

Third, the plumbing field is currently plagued by numerous unlicensed plumbers who operate throughout New York State. Not only do they violate the law by operating without a license, they jeopardize their clients, the general public, and themselves. This is because plumbers routinely work with, or in the same working environment as, natural gas, carbon monoxide, sewer gas and other toxic gases that need to be properly vented, home heating oil, electricity, chemicals, sewage, pressurized water and waste water, all of which pose significant dangers to life, health, and property. Even putting aside the paramount issue of safety, as a pure matter of customer satisfaction, unlicensed plumbers are frequently unlicensed for a reason, *i.e.*, they are unqualified. Virtually every licensed plumber has encountered numerous instances of being called to remedy the work of an unlicensed plumber. Unfortunately for the affected homeowners and commercial property owners, this remedial work must usually also be undertaken at their expense, as the unlicensed plumbers are uninsured. To illustrate the perils of non-licensed plumbing, attached is a printout of a 2018 article from the *Queens Chronicle* about the criminal sentencing of an unlicensed Queens-based "plumber" who exploited his customers. Moreover, the quality and level of licensing enforcement varies on a local basis. A state-wide license would allow state-wide examinations and enforcement. Under a state license law, New York State and its political subdivisions could impose fines to curtail unlicensed contractors.

Fourth, plumbing is not only a complex endeavor in its own right, it is also one subject to continuing change, evolution and advancement as a result of new plumbing, heating, and cooling equipment and technologies. These include, but are not limited to, energy-conserving "green" products. The constant inflow of new technologies makes continuing education regarding such changes, and related issues essential to the safety and welfare of consumers, the public, and plumbers, indispensable. However, with the exception of New York City, no continuing education requirement for plumbers currently exists in New York. A statewide plumbing license should and could require a recertification class to better educate the thousands of statewide licensed plumbers who renew their licenses and are often unfamiliar with code changes and new safety requirements. Requiring a continuing education program will better protect the health and safety of all New York's residents.

The LIPHCC and PHCC of New York have been engaged in efforts to establish a state-level licensing requirement for well over 20 years. These efforts, which have received the support of both Democrats and Republicans, have been undertaken at both the state and local

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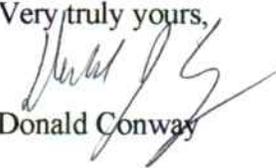
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levels, and both in Nassau County and in Albany, but without marked success to date. The support for this state license was equally supported by organized plumbing trade shops. **To be clear, we seek no special privilege or status from the State. Instead, we seek only equality. We find it both incomprehensible and indefensible that occupations and professions ranging from athletic trainers, auto repair shops, beauty salons, dental assistants, interior designers, court reporters, veterinary technicians and landscape architects to physicians, nurses, dentists, attorneys, engineers and architects can all enjoy being licensed on a statewide level, without any apparent negative consequences. In contrast, for no apparent reason and certainly no justifiable one, plumbers must be licensed separately in each of the numerous localities in which they conduct business on a daily basis.**

The PHCCLI would greatly appreciate any assistance you can provide in its efforts to secure a state-wide license. We traveled to Albany for years to lobby our efforts and would gladly accept an invitation to return. On its behalf, I thank you for your interest in our efforts to promote unified standards for plumbing licensing, enforcement and continuing education throughout New York State.

Please let us know if you need any further information, or if there is any assistance the PHCCLI can give if you have any means of advancing this process.

Very truly yours,


Donald Conway

cc: PHCCLI Executive Committee