

Legislative Analysis



ESTABLISH PLUMBER APPRENTICE RATIO

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Senate Bill 740 (S-1) as reported from House committee

Sponsor: Sen. Darrin Camilleri

House Committee: Labor

Senate Committee: Labor

Complete to 10-1-24

Analysis available at
<http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

(Enacted as Public Act 172 of 2024)

BRIEF SUMMARY: Senate Bill 740 would amend the Skilled Trades Regulation Act to establish a ratio of one journey or master plumber to up to two apprentice plumbers.

FISCAL IMPACT: Senate Bill 740 would have an indeterminate fiscal impact on state and local government units. It is expected that the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) and local agencies that enforce the Michigan Plumbing Code would receive increased revenues from collected violation fines. The amount of the increase would depend on the number of violations, and the impact on a specific agency would depend on how many violations the agency discovers. The bill would likely require additional enforcement costs as well, which would depend on the volume of complaints and investigations.

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Currently, the Skilled Trades Regulation Act does not prescribe a ratio for how many plumbing apprentices can be present at a job site for each journey plumber or master plumber. Some believe that, as a result, some plumbing contractors are placing too many apprentices at a job site without proper supervision, which prevents the apprentices from receiving the necessary training and on-site experience to prepare them to fulfill their job duties safely and correctly.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

The Skilled Trades Regulation Act requires apprentice plumbers, as their principal occupation, to be engaged in learning and assisting in the installation of plumbing under the direct supervision of a journey plumber or master plumber.

Under Senate Bill 740, one journey plumber or master plumber could provide direct, on-site, in-person supervision to not more than two apprentices. LARA or an enforcing agency (the governmental agency that, in accordance with the Stille-DeRossett-Hale Single State Construction Code Act, is responsible for administering and enforcing the State Construction Code within a county, city, village, or township) would be responsible for enforcing this ratio on a jobsite basis.

A plumbing contractor that violates these provisions would be subject to a \$5,000 administrative fine for a first violation, a \$10,000 administrative fine for a second violation, and a minimum 90 days' suspension of their plumbing contractor's license for a third violation. After 90 days, the contractor could have their license reinstated if they pass a plumbing contractor examination.

LARA would have to pay any money collected from a fine to the enforcing agency that discovered the violation. If LARA issues an order for a violation, it would be entitled to actual costs and attorney fees related to the investigation and adjudication of the violation.

MCL 339.6117 (amended) and MCL 339.6117a (proposed)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

Supporters argue that the bill would improve the quality, safety, and efficiency of plumbing projects by ensuring that a job is done correctly the first time and that apprentices are properly trained by experienced professionals. Increased supervision from journey plumbers or master plumbers would provide more valuable learning opportunities and ensure that mistakes are caught before a safety hazard or health risk occurs, which supporters argue would save businesses money. They suggest that establishing a ratio for plumbing apprentices is a commonsense change that would align plumbing with other trades. Electricians, for example, are currently subject to a ratio of one journey or master electrician to up to three apprentices.

Against:

No arguments opposing the bill were presented during committee testimony, although concerns were raised about whether the bill would limit job opportunities for new apprentices and whether the ratio would have a tangible impact on worker safety.

POSITIONS:

Representatives of the following entities testified in support of the bill (9-25-24):

- Michigan Pipe Trades Association
- United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipefitting Industry (UA) Local 333
- UA Local 370
- UA Local 671

The following entities indicated support for the bill (9-25-24):

- International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Michigan State Conference
- Michigan Nurses Association
- UA Local 85
- UA Local 98
- UA Local 111
- UA Local 174
- UA Local 190
- UA Local 357
- UA Local 636
- UA Local 704

The following entities indicated opposition to the bill (9-25-24):

- Associated Builders and Contractors of Michigan
- Grand Rapids Chamber
- Home Builders Association of Michigan

- Lake Michigan College
- Michigan Chamber of Commerce
- Michigan Chemistry Council
- Michigan Manufacturers Association
- National Federation of Independent Business
- Small Business Association of Michigan

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