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**Pennsylvania House of Representatives
House Labor Relations Committee**

Good Afternoon! On behalf of Bob Heenan and Local 542 I would like to thank the committee for inviting me here today. My name is Anthony Lusi , I am a third generation Pennsylvania Hoisting and Portable Equipment Operator. I have thirty-two years experience working and training in Pennsylvania's Heavy Equipment Industry as a member of the Operating Engineers Local 542. Currently I am employed as a Health and Safety Representative and Assistant Director of Training for our union. Over the past eleven years I have had the honor and pleasure of training others as well as continually upgrading my skills in this ever-changing trade.

Our organization represents over six thousand heavy equipment operators that work in thirty-four eastern Pennsylvania counties. In a constantly changing work environment, the twenty first century equipment operator must try to keep pace with manufactures' new technology. Safety for the general public and construction workers in our industry is always of the utmost concern for all Pennsylvania workers. Accidents involving cranes can be costly in terms of serious injury, property damage, lost time and litigation. In our experiences near misses and minor accidents happen daily in this state. Unfortunately there has been a rash of crane accidents resulting in multiple deaths over the past months, up and down the east coast.

While working in our trade, I was never aware of any legal issues that affected the operating engineer at performing their job. Insurance coverage for operating engineers working on jobs isn't a standard practice. Currently our trade is regulated under O.S.H.A. construction and general industry standards. The equipment we operate is designed, constructed, maintained and operated following the appropriate A.S.M.E. safety standards. Manufacturers also govern the operation of each and every specific piece of heavy equipment.

Standardized assessment of the knowledge and skills required of crane crews can lead to accident reduction. Proper crane operator, signalman and rigger training and certification is important to help ensure cranes are operated, assembled and disassembled in a manner that minimizes the potential for accidents that would result in serious injuries and/or fatalities. Most experts agree that to have the best chance for a safe crane lift, the operator, signalman and the rigger must be trained and assess in their knowledge and skill to accomplish each task.

The mobility of cranes today allows them to reach almost every industry on a daily basis in Pennsylvania. Manufacturers build units today that can lift more and reach higher than any of their predecessors. In the critical tasks of assembly and disassembly, the new technology of crane manufacturers allows their big mobile units on and off sites almost daily. This altering work environment creates a never-ending battle with ground support conditions, changing weather and employer schedules. In most cases the crane erection crew is different from job site to job site. Along with this great technology come more complex conditions for today's crane crews to safely adjust to.

Operators are responsible for an extensive evaluation of the crane on a daily basis; according to each different manufacturer's procedures. Some operators change cranes on a daily, weekly or monthly routine. Each time they are subjected to different procedures, load charts and manuals related to that specific type of crane they are assigned to operate. Compounding the situation, cranes use all different types of computer systems, which are manufactured generally independent of the crane. The greater complexity makes them increasingly less forgiving and heightens the level of operator training and skill necessary for safe operation.

We also realize how important of a role the signalman plays in safe lifting operations. These individuals must understand the basic limitations and operations of each specific crane that they are signaling. They must understand how to communicate safely to the crane operator and also keep their eyes on a changing work environment that could affect the next crane move.

The rigger is the person that connects all loads to the crane hook, by means of lifting slings and hardware. Crane operators understand how critical this individual is to a safe crane lift. Hardware and sling criteria along with correct usage is critical to keep the load attached to the crane hook.

We have not experienced much resistance from manufacturers, owners, users or tradesman while inquiring about the potential for certification and licensing. Everyone acknowledges how dangerous the industry can be, and they are united to provide the safest environment possible.

The economic impact should be minimal on the industry and employees. The licensure should not create any undue barriers of entry into the practice of the profession or adversely affect the availability of services to consumers.

Local 542 of the Operating Engineers supports any training, certification and licensure existing and future crane crews will be required to achieve. We would be honored to participate with other trades on the "State Board of Construction Trades" for Pennsylvania.

In HB 617, that addresses crane operator licensure, we hope that our state will take one step forward towards a safer work site environment. Safer work sites create safe conditions for the general public. As most of you are aware this licensure has passed the House of Representatives twice overwhelming, just to die in the Senate Appropriations Committee. There are approximately 15 states and 10 cities that require crane operators to be licensed. The city of Philadelphia's Department of Licenses and Inspection is only weeks away from requiring all Tower Crane Operators, signalman, riggers and inspectors to implement their new regulations.

Automobiles, motorcycles and their inspectors are licensed in this state. Why not license operators of cranes in Pennsylvania?