

**Testimony Delivered in Opposition to SB 17-055  
15 March, 2017**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you, today.

My name is Peter Drake. I submitted testimony against this bill when it was up for its first review on 6 February, 2017. Since that time, I have continued my work as an apprentice plumber, apprenticed to a Golden-area company through Plumber's Local Union 3, advancing my education in guaranteeing clean water supply, and proper, sanitary drainage for schools and other public facilities. I am speaking before you, today, as I did in my first testimony, out of deep opposition to Senate Bill 17-055 on behalf of my co-workers, union and non-union.

When I first submitted testimony against this bill, I sent notes to all of the Senators on the Senate Committee charged with reviewing the bill, signifying my opposition. Senator Neville, very kindly, took time to respond to the note that I sent him. In his response, he stated that he "believe[s] in the right of free association and that no individual should be forced to join a union or pay to any third party organization to get or keep their job."

While I respect Senator Neville's personal position, as he has stated it, I do, respectfully, disagree that SB 17-055 will promote any kind of constructive "freedom of association" for the workers that it would affect.

It is correct to believe that it is unfair and unjust that an individual should be "forced" to pay a "third party organization to get or keep their job." However, this is not how unions operate.

The people whom I work with, as apprentice, journeymen and master plumbers, have chosen to associate with the Plumbers Local 3 union because they recognize that, by organizing and contributing (through their dues and participation at meetings) to the union, they gain greater collective freedom to defend and advance the quality of the health and safety protections, and financial benefits, available for performing work well on a work site.

Likewise, the people who administer the offices of the union (as business managers and organizers) offer the opportunity for workers to organize, and to join the union, because they recognize that, without collective representation to actively defend health and safety protections, actively defend existing scales of pay, and medical benefits, these protections and benefits would be continually reduced by management—the corporate interests at worksites, whose concern for maximum profit has continually taken precedent over the protection of workers.

Unions, then, do not seek to infringe "freedom of association," and do not seek to prohibit, exclude, or otherwise discriminate against any class, race, creed, age or gender of worker on a worksite. Instead, unions, seek to promote the freedom to gain a greater quality of life from the work one would perform on a worksite.

It is measures, such as SB17-055, which work to infringe "freedom" of workers, by falsely equating "discrimination" and infringement of freedom with a union membership requirement. By doing this, SB17-055 places even more power in the hands of already-powerful, large-scale corporate employers to set wages and benefits, as well as working times and conditions—while, at the same time, depriving unions of resources which are used to fund education, health and safety standards enforcement, medical care and pensions; and, effectively, also expecting unions to still represent all workers on a work site, from this reduced operating basis.

This translates, therefore, to a net loss of freedom for Colorado workers—a virtual requirement to work longer and harder, under less safe and lower-paying conditions, if a worker wants to keep his or her job. As I made clear in my previous testimony: Union members only want good governance, and fairness. Our demands are neither extraordinary nor discriminatory, but rather stand firmly in the best tradition of American justice. Out of my deep concern to advance the quality of life for Colorado's workers, who are doing so much and will continue to do so much to strengthen Colorado's economy, I ask you, please, to vote no on Senate Bill 55.