

Thank you for that very kind introduction.

It is a pleasure to be here with all of you.

I want to thank ANSI and especially Dr. Roy Swift for giving me this opportunity to share the United Association's views on certification in the workplace.

At the UA, we have been certifying our members in various skills for many years.

The concept of certification is not new to us...

...And I think I can say with all confidence that the UA was one of the first unions to embrace the whole idea.

We have always supplied the finest craftspeople in the U.S., in Canada, and now in Panama.

UA members are found anywhere there is work in the plumbing, pipefitting, HVACR and fire protection industries.

Certification has always been a part of our philosophy...

...Especially if you think of attaining journeyman status as one form of certification.

But we have never stopped there.

We have always insisted on training our members with the goal of certification to plumbing and various industry codes throughout our more than 100 years of existence.

To us, these codes are essential to protecting the health of our citizens...

...And in fact, that's one of our most time-honored slogans...

...That UA plumbers protect the health of the nation.

Today, for the most part, we take clean water and sanitary sewage systems for granted.

But in fact, it wasn't all that long ago that waterborne diseases caused many deaths and untold misery.

It was the development of the modern plumbing systems that wiped out these terrible diseases...

...Although today we are seeing a rise in other forms of contagious diseases, which are cause for concern.

Once again, the UA and our contractors are ready to step in and do whatever we can to safeguard the health and well being of our citizens.

We agree with ANSI that certification can play a significant role across the world in preventing diseases like SARS and waterborne illnesses.

Certifications such as those established by the UA enable us to verify that our members have the highest levels of training and education in many different areas.

In truth, we are so much more than simply certified plumbers in the UA.

Just consider the fact that our national welder certification program alone allows us to achieve three major objectives.

The program provides highly qualified and certified welders to industrial and commercial contractors.

It is cost effective for these employers...

...And it provides lower construction and maintenance costs for the end user or owner of the project.

Our welder certification program is used extensively in power plants, refineries and other heavy industrial applications.

We also certify our members in the installation high purity piping systems.

In fact, Local 393 in San Jose, California, was a pioneer in developing the certifications in this part of our trade.

Now, these certifications are a mainstay of the microchip manufacturing industry around the world.

Our members are certified to do work in the most complex and sensitive areas...

...Such as the bio-technology and pharmaceutical industries that are producing the latest medicines to keep us healthy and to treat some of our most serious diseases.

But we aren't just making the plants that make the medicines to keep us well...

...We're also building the hospitals and medical facilities where our citizens get the best care possible.

We're proud of our medical gas certification program because we know it assures that the complex systems in these facilities are installed safely and properly...

...And that's quite simply a matter of life and death.

The UA is recognized as the leader in the field when it comes to supplying medical gas system technicians ...

...Along with the instructors, inspectors and system verifiers who make sure these systems work properly.

When I talk to people outside our industry, I'm often tempted to ask them if they feel more secure when they go to a hospital where they know the people who installed the systems there had to earn a minimum score of 85 percent in order to be allowed to install a single piece of medical piping.

However, I know most people take it for granted that they'll get the oxygen they need, when they need it...

...And the truth is, they should take it for granted, so long as it was a UA member installing that system.

The United Association also has long standing certification programs in valve repair, sprinklerfitting, instrumentation and calibration, as well as many safety programs specific to different parts of our industry.

I am proud to say that these certification programs are audited and verified by several highly respected third party entities.

For example, we have a longstanding relationship with the Hartford Company...

...And we have also selected the National Inspection Testing and Certification Corporation...

...Or the NITC as we call it...

...To administer our certifications.

One of the main reasons we chose the NITC was their accreditation by ANSI to the ISO/IEC 17024 standard.

We use the NITC for medical gas certifications...

...For our HVACR and fire sprinkler mastery certifications...

...And they are also assisting with our plumber and pipefitter mastery certifications.

But we see this as an ongoing, long term program.

We know that we'll be using the NITC for more certifications in the future, as these are developed and accredited in conjunction with ANSI.

In other words, we wholeheartedly support ANSI and the ISO/IEC 17024 standard.

We feel that way because we know that ANSI shares our commitment to quality...

...Just as our signatory contractors do.

Through our various local union and international training efforts, we spend well over \$100 million a year on training.

We have more than 300 local training facilities across the U.S., Canada and Panama.

We also have a regional school system that is strategically placed so that our members can get the specialized training they need.

These schools use all the latest tele-conferencing equipment so that we can take our training to every corner of North America.

In turn, this training is validated by our various certification programs.

This allows us to constantly monitor ourselves...

...To make sure we keep our promise to produce highly-skilled workers who deserve the good wages and benefits that go with a union job.

After all, that's what we all want...

...A good job, with benefits, in a workplace that is safe and secure.

We believe that our superior training programs give us the credibility we need to demand the wages we deserve.

That's just one reason why we will never stop training...

...Never stop developing certification programs to meet our industry's demand...

...And never stop working to the highest standards possible in our field.

Whether they know it or not, our society depends on our skills...

...And we intend to deliver those skills.

The UA is a union that is well positioned for the future.

We intend to grow and prosper in the years ahead.

I think we've proven that we can rise to any challenge put before us.

I'm looking forward to working with all of you as we continue to safeguard the health of our citizens.

May God bless all of you...

**May God protect our armed forces and bring them safely home
again...**

...And may God bless America.