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The Power of Partnership - by Andrew DeAngelo

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One thing we can all be thankful for in Massachusetts is we can expect when we turn on the tap, that we will have clean water. That's not by accident.

A recent study found that Massachusetts has the fifth highest quality drinking water in America. That's largely because of our strong plumbing codes, our commitment to healthy and safe communities and dedicated partnerships between contractors, property owners and managers and licensed, professional plumbers. It is these partnerships that make it possible for our state to keep the water systems safely flowing in our neighborhoods, schools, hospitals, offices, restaurants and public buildings.

On October 12, the Greater Boston Plumbing Contractors Association will celebrate "The Power of Partnership" between contractors who conduct the majority of plumbing services across eastern Massachusetts and the union plumbers they partner with on projects every day. It's the Greater Boston PCA's bi-annual "Industry Appreciation Night" and there's much to celebrate.

The event is being held to honor industry leaders and scholarship recipients, as well as provide a platform for our trade's best and brightest to gather and recognize the advancements and successes in our profession, including ongoing strategies to maintain our nationally-recognized water safety standards.

Whether it's rebuilding Norwood Hospital, the expansion of Massachusetts General Hospital, new public housing in Charlestown and South Boston or the massive new community being built at Suffolk Downs, we can count on the water being clean and the systems being efficient, sanitary and properly installed, thanks to these partnerships.

We've seen the disastrous results in communities that fail to monitor water safety, including the harmful impacts on citizens who deserve better. Recent studies have found unhealthy and even hazardous drinking water in states with standards below Massachusetts, including Iowa, Mississippi, Florida, and California. The catastrophic and unacceptable failures in these states, as well as others, is a stark reminder that protecting our drinking water supply is essential to keeping our communities healthy.

Reducing or relaxing plumbing codes will only make it easier for rogue contractors to do business in our state, while also putting drinking water and sanitary systems at great risk. It is for this very reason that contractors and union plumbers joined together recently at the state's first-ever

Plumbing Industry Advocacy Day at the Massachusetts Statehouse.

Not only did we voice our concerns to legislative leaders about the importance of protecting our state's effective plumbing code, we also discussed the importance of supporting safety, training and apprenticeship programs and requiring that drain cleaning be done by licensed plumbers.

Failing to maintain standards of water quality and sewage outflow will result in major public health problems that will impact every facet of our lives. Maintaining Massachusetts' exemplary standards is not only a badge of honor and a source of pride, it's a matter of public health and safety.

We are at an inflection point in Greater Boston as we are seeing massive new mixed-use "live, work, play" communities sprouting up from Somerville to Dedham to Haverhill to Revere to Westwood to Hanover to Cape Cod. We need to ensure that these new communities, which often include restaurants and hotels, lab and research facilities and much-needed green space, have the benefit of expert planning and engineering, which includes the participation of the greatest plumbing expertise available.

The experts we need to protect us all from water quality failure are members of the Greater Boston Plumbing Contractors Association and the union plumbers at Local 12 in Boston. The continued partnership of these organizations will ensure that these new planned communities, hospitals, schools and major infrastructure projects continue our state's track record of excellence when it comes to water quality and community health.

Anything less would be shortchanging taxpayers, business owners and consumers and denying the public their right to peace of mind when filling their glass beneath the faucet.

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