

MARYLAND WORKFORCE ALLIANCE

SB419

Labor and Employment: Grant Program for Workforce Skills Assessment Position: FAVORABLE

Madame Chair and Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

The Maryland Workforce Alliance (MWA) is a statewide, multi-industry membership organization representing 35 labor unions, trade associations, and apprenticeship sponsors & intermediaries (see: mdworkforcealliance.com/members). MWA was formed to advocate for an increase in state and local investment in training programs that help Marylanders acquire the skills needed to obtain jobs in high wage, high growth occupations in public and private sectors. Through our work, MWA aims to bridge the skills gap and address critical employment shortages in key fields; and forge pathways that connect employers, apprenticeship sponsors, and job seekers.

MWA supports SB419, establishing a grant program for Workforce Skills Assessment in the Maryland Department of Labor, allowing employers to access financial assistance to measure job-related skills of employees. Providing employers with financial incentives to take on apprentices, and have the ability to track their skills and progress, will ensure the state meets its goal of 45% of students graduating high school with an industry recognized credential. Furthermore, it will help to close the skills gap in sectors facing critical employment shortages by ensuring there is adequate job training through apprenticeships.

Apprenticeships benefit employers in the long term because they provide:

- **A Low Cost, High Return Investment:** When employers hire apprentices, they have lower costs for internal training and recruitment, and they have higher employee retention rates.
- **A Customized Approach to Training:** Apprenticeships are tailored to a specific job role, allowing the role to be tailored to the needs of each business or industry.
- **Related Classroom Instruction:** The integration of on and off-the-job training¹ provides apprentices multiple education pathways to gain the skills that are needed for career readiness.

For employers to gain the full benefits listed above, we must provide them financial assistance through grant programs. The Maryland Workforce Alliance encourages a favorable report on SB419.

Thank you for reading our testimony. Please feel free to contact us if you have any follow up questions.

Respectfully,

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¹ through robust Career & Technical Education classes in public schools