



SB033 More Opportunities for Career–Focused Students Act of 2024

Tuesday, January 16, 2024

EDUCATION, ENERGY, & THE ENVIRONMENT

SUPPORT

Our names are Mara Babb, Subhashi Pradhan, Noor Chaudhry, and Julien Halleman, and we are students of Anne Arundel County Public Schools. On behalf of the Chesapeake Regional Association of Student Councils (CRASC), we are writing in support of SB033 More Opportunities for Career–Focused Students Act of 2024. If passed, the bill will require county boards of education to view the pursuit of certification and apprenticeships as equivalent to pursuing post-secondary education by informing students of employment/skills training opportunities and paying for certain apprenticeship entrance exams and industrial certifications. Additionally, this bill will establish a method to authorize the release of student information to certain apprenticeship sponsors and employers; with consent from the student or parent/guardian.

CRASC strongly supports increased career-focused programs for students with varying interests and all socio-economic backgrounds. With higher education becoming less accessible due to high tuition rates and the repeal of affirmative action, this bill will allow students to pursue vocational trades and have access to jobs upon graduation. This bill will greatly support the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Program that the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) have aligned in their 2022 blueprint. These programs enable students to earn a specific certification that is valued by industry communities during their high school education. It may take up to four years for students to gain hours required to earn industry certifications, however, students in CTE programs can simultaneously enroll in CTE courses while completing their graduation requirements in order to earn certifications earlier in their high school careers.

Access to apprenticeship and CTE programs will greatly benefit both students and businesses. With these opportunities for students of Maryland, they will be ahead of their peers from other states and be competitive for selective hiring processes. This will accumulate in students earning a salary while learning industry skills at the worksite by skilled mentors, gain experience and practice in technical and employability skills, and a jump start to full time employment right after graduation. Additionally, with CTE programs and the release of student information to certain apprenticeship sponsors/employers, businesses in Maryland are provided a stable and reliable employment pipeline, increased employee retention, a customizable and a systemic approach to training, and a positive return of investment.

These clear benefits of apprenticeships and certification programs have been both recognized by students and boards of education. According to the MSDE 2022 Blueprint for Maryland's Future, between the school years 2020-2021 to 2021-2022, participation in apprenticeships in high school increased by 108% which signifies the increased popularity and interest in career opportunities. Additionally, the blueprint sets the goal of having 45% of high school students participate and complete an apprenticeship or an industry-recognized occupational credential by the school year 2030-2031.

The CRASC Legislative Department refers back to the following relevant clauses of the CRASC Platform:

- *CRASC Supports...* The expansion of post-secondary resources through the employment of college counselors and opportunities such as college preparation initiatives, scholarship opportunities, and SAT preparation and administration; (Plank 3, Clause Q)
- *CRASC Supports...* Expansion of academic opportunities for all students by diversifying the curriculum; (Plank 3, Clause B)

Accordingly, CRASC respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** committee report on SB033.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mara Babb, Secretary of Legislation, babbmara@gmail.com

Noor Chaudhry, Legislative Liaison, noorschaudhry@gmail.com

Julian Halleman, Legislative Liaison, julienh123@icloud.com

Subhashi Pradhan, Legislative Liaison, subhashi_pradhan@hotmail.com