

JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 910

Governor's Workforce Development Board - Study on Advancing Skills-Based Hiring

TO: Hon. C. T. Wilson, Chair, and Members of the House Economic Matters Committee

FROM: Job Opportunities Task Force

DATE: March 27, 2024

The Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) is an independent, nonprofit organization that develops and advocates policies and programs to increase the skills, job opportunities, and incomes of low-wage workers and job seekers in Maryland. **JOTF supports Senate Bill 910, which would require the Governor's Workforce Development Board to conduct a study on approaches to advancing skills-driven education and training, hiring, and internal advancement practices across public and private sector employers.**

The cost of public universities in the U.S. has tripled since 1980. The average annual cost of tuition and fees at a private four-year college was \$39,400 in 2023. The average rate of college tuition inflation is 8% per year. The growing unaffordability of higher education for the average Marylander displayed by these statistics help illustrate the reasons why college enrollment has been steadily declining for the past decade.

Maryland has to prepare for an imminent future with a workforce that will have decreasing levels of higher education. But college affordability is a nationwide issue; the United States as a whole will have less educated future generations compared to the current levels. This will lead to an increasingly competitive market as companies and corporations in other states will invest in attracting talent. To stay competitive as a state, Maryland must ensure that lacking a college degree will not unnecessarily suppress a person's earning potential, because soon one of the pillars of the state's economy will consist of employees who fall under that category.

Senate Bill 910 addresses this concern by making sure the state does its due diligence in promoting skills-based education and training practices within the private and public sectors. Navigating this process has and will continue to be complex for employers, which is why support from state government is imperative to ensure success.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 910.

For more information, contact:

Kam Bridges / Senior Public Policy Advocate / Kam@jotf.org