

Date: March 6, 2024  
Committee: Senate Finance Committee  
Bill Title: Governor's Workforce Development Board - Study on Advancing Skills-Based Hiring (Amended Title)  
Re: Senate Bill 0910 - FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

**The Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB) of Maryland is pleased to support Senate Bill 0910 with amendments.** We believe this legislation, with the amendments submitted on March 12th, provides a necessary opportunity to better understand how far Maryland has come and where we need to break ground next in our goals to advance skills-based hiring in both the public and private sectors. Recommendations developed through this study have the potential to open doors to good, family-sustaining jobs for thousands of Marylanders, and to vastly expand the available talent pool for Maryland employers.

As a State, we have taken promising steps to advance skills-based hiring - which entails screening for specific competencies, rather than degrees - in both public and private sector employment. In 2022, Maryland was the first state in the nation to eliminate the four-year college degree requirement from many state jobs via Executive Order. Since then, the State of Maryland has hired thousands of skilled workers who do not hold college degrees. Similarly, private sector employers in Maryland and across the country have started removing unnecessary degree requirements for some jobs.

We applaud efforts made to date. We also recognize that, on a national scale, implementing a new focus on skills over degrees has been found challenging and complex for employers. True progress is slow to catch up to proclaimed intentions because of how embedded degree-focused practices are in many employers' recruitment and hiring processes.<sup>1</sup> There are also likely many more well-paying, in-demand jobs that could be opened to skilled candidates without degrees. There are estimated to be more than 70 million skilled individuals without degrees in the U.S.<sup>2</sup> We are committed to leaving none of those within our borders behind.

The Moore-Miller Administration has demonstrated its commitment to expanding non-degree pathways to good jobs, including with investments to rapidly expand Registered Apprenticeships, as well as its cutting-edge expansion of public service opportunities as career pathways. Having employers ready to embrace job seekers along these non-degree pathways is necessary for their success at opening doors - but shifting from engrained degree-focused practices to skills-based practices is a tall order for most employers.

Advancing skills-based practices among Maryland's employers will accelerate progress toward the State's goals to expand non-degree pathways such as apprenticeship, to fill thousands of open jobs, and to unlock employment opportunities for thousands of Maryland residents who currently find themselves sidelined without a diploma or degree. In order to chart a path forward as we advance our State's skills-focused strategies, we need to understand where we are right now - what's working, what is challenging, and how the State can help accelerate progress.

**The GWDB requests a Favorable Report, with amendments, on Senate Bill 0910.**

<sup>1</sup> Sigelman, M., Fuller, J., Martin, A. (February 2024). Skills-Based Hiring: The Long Road from Pronouncements to Practice. Published by Burning Glass Institute: <https://bit.ly/3Pmff5R>

<sup>2</sup> Opportunity@Work. (Reach for the STARS: Realizing the Potential of America's Hidden Talent Pool: <https://bit.ly/43hg99I>)