

Mid-Atlantic Pipe Trades Association

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Economic Matters Committee

To: Delegate CT Wilson, Chair; Delegate Brian Crosby, Vice Chair; and Members of the Committee
From: Jason Ascher, Political Director, Mid-Atlantic Pipe Trades Association

Support with Amendment HB 501 – Registered Apprenticeship Investments for a Stronger Economy (RAISE) Act

On behalf of the Mid-Atlantic Pipe Trades Association and our five United Association of Plumbers and Steamfitters Locals, which represent 10,000+ Plumbers, Steamfitters, Welders, HVAC Techs, and Sprinkler Fitters across Maryland, I ask you to **SUPPORT HB 501 with Amendment.**

As an organization, we have concerns about several aspects of the legislation.

Our apprenticeships are our pride and joy at the United Association of Plumbers and Steamfitters. Our members complete a five-year program, receiving over 1,200 hours in the classroom and 10,000 hours of on-the-job training. Our programs are recognized as the gold standard for registered apprenticeship programs nationwide. However, simply being a "registered" program should be the minimum requirement. An apprentice graduating from a program must possess the necessary knowledge of their craft and a thorough understanding of the plumbing and fuel gas code, which is a crucial part of their training. The only way to achieve this is through a licensing exam on the code, as is currently being implemented. We respectfully ask that the exemption for the exam be removed from this legislation.

Maintaining a 1:1 ratio of journeymen to apprentices on the job site is essential, as the journeyman ensures the apprentice completes their work safely, protecting the public, the apprentice, and other workers on site. This ratio is already low, and reducing it could pose a public safety risk, as both public safety and the quality of work in this industry would be severely compromised. Plumbing and gas fitting involve highly complex tasks in a trade that is becoming increasingly sophisticated by integrating modern tools, materials, and systems. A seasoned journeyman should supervise and monitor only one apprentice while carrying out their duties. This mentoring approach has been effective for over 100 years in this trade and should not be arbitrarily diminished. As noted, improperly installed or maintained plumbing or gas fitting systems can be extremely dangerous, potentially leading to loss of life and property. These serious consequences will directly result from this poorly conceived bill that has not been adequately considered.

Finally, while we fully support funding for pre-apprenticeship and CTE programs, a successful model for comprehensive apprenticeship programs has existed for over a century. Our concern is that contractors or intermediaries may exploit the system by continually firing and replacing apprentices to keep receiving tax incentives. Contractors participating in a specific apprenticeship program share the cost of training their apprentices with the journeymen who will help train them on the job. This setup gives both contractors and workers a vested interest in training the next generation of plumbers.

We urge you to support **HB 501** with the amendment.

Sincerely,

Jason Ascher
Political Director
Mid-Atlantic Pipe Trades Association

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