



Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes

Testimony for Senate Bill 431

Registered Apprenticeship Investments for a Stronger Economy (RAISE) Act

TO: Hon. William C. Smith, Jr, Chair, and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Job Opportunities Task Force

DATE: February 19, 2024

POSITION: Support

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 431.**

Senate Bill 431 authorizes the State Board of Plumbing to waive the license examination requirement for a journey plumber's license if the individual has completed a plumbing apprenticeship program approved by the Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning and allows the Secretary of Labor to waive the examination requirement if the Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Council finds that the approved program meets industry standards. It also establishes the Maryland Office of Registered Apprenticeship Development within the Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Program within the Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning for the purpose of marketing and advancing the registered apprenticeship system through the state. Lastly, it creates an annual budget appropriation to fund the office.

Maryland needs increased investment into alternative career development paths other than traditional higher education. The average total cost of attendance for University of Maryland for the 2023-2024 academic year was slightly \$30,000 for Maryland residents. Even with one of the highest median household incomes in the country of roughly \$101,000, the costs of a college degree are simply too heavy a burden for many Marylanders. Apprenticeship programs that lead to family sustaining careers is a crucial component of boosting Maryland workforce productivity and ultimately sustaining the overall health of the economy. Senate Bill 431's investments in both a governmental office and programmatic funding will help ensure that Maryland builds a well-trained, productive workforce that meets the needs of the state's economy.

For these reasons, JOTF supports Senate Bill 431 and urges a favorable report.

For more information, contact:

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