

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2024 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 837
Ways and Means

(Delegate Wu, *et al.*)

Rules

More Opportunities for Career-Focused Students Act of 2024

This bill requires public high schools to inform students of employment and skills training opportunities in the same manner that they inform them of postsecondary educational opportunities. Information provided to students by public high schools must include information on employment and skills training opportunities available through (1) registered apprenticeship sponsors; (2) employers registered with the Maryland Department of Labor or workforce development boards; and (3) schools licensed by the Maryland Higher Education Commission that provide training, retraining, or enhancement in employment skills. When informing students about these opportunities, each public high school must highlight opportunities in high-skilled careers that do not require completion of a college degree and are in high demand in the State. Local school boards must assist public high schools in complying with the bill. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2024.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill pertains only to local school boards.

Local Effect: The bill is not anticipated to have a material effect on local operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: For an overview of registered apprenticeship programs in the State, please see the **Appendix – Apprenticeship**.

Local workforce development boards (LWDBs) are mandated under the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), with local employers making up a majority of the members of each board. Maryland has 13 regional LWDBs serving all 24 counties, including Baltimore City. Primarily through more than 30 American Job Centers located throughout the State, LWDBs offer basic career services (*e.g.*, job search assistance); individualized career services (*e.g.*, training in interviewing skills); and referrals to more industry specific training (*e.g.*, apprenticeships or technical classroom training). Priority is given to people with barriers to employment, as defined by WIOA. Some services target youth, returning citizens, and veterans.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See SB 121 and HB 1247 of 2023; SB 318 and HB 652 of 2022.

Designated Cross File: SB 33 (Senator Rosapepe, *et al.*) - Education, Energy, and the Environment.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Department of Labor; Baltimore City Public Schools; Anne Arundel County Public Schools; Montgomery County Public Schools; Prince George's County Public Schools; St. Mary's County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

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Appendix – Apprenticeship

Generally, apprenticeship is a voluntary, industry-sponsored system that prepares individuals for occupations typically requiring high-level skills and related technical knowledge. Apprenticeships are sponsored by one or more employers or jointly by a labor-management committee. An apprentice receives supervised, structured, on-the-job training under the direction of a skilled journeyman and related technical instruction in a specific occupation. Apprenticeships are designed to meet the workforce needs of the program sponsor. Many industry sponsors use apprenticeship as a method to train employees in the knowledge necessary to become a skilled worker. This also means the number of apprenticeships available is dependent on the current workforce needs of the industry and the capacity and willingness of employers or employer groups to supervise them.

Apprenticeships are available to individuals age 16 and older; an employer, however, may set a higher entry age. By law, individuals must be age 18 to apprentice in hazardous occupations, although there are some exemptions available to minors who are registered as apprentices. Time-based apprenticeships last from one to six years and involve a minimum of 144 hours of related technical instruction and at least 2,000 hours per year of on-the-job training.

A national apprenticeship and training program was established in federal law in 1937 with the passage of the National Apprenticeship Act, also known as the Fitzgerald Act. The purpose of the Act was to promote national standards of apprenticeship and to safeguard the welfare of apprentice workers.

Along with [more than half of other states and the District of Columbia](#), Maryland has chosen to operate its own apprenticeship programs under the federal law. The Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning (DWDAL) within the Maryland Department of Labor is responsible for the daily oversight of State apprenticeship programs. More specifically, DWDAL approves new apprenticeship programs as well as changes to current programs and ensures compliance with State and federal requirements. The approval process involves assessing the appropriateness of an apprenticeship program in a proposed industry, the education that will be provided to the apprentice, the current staffing level of the entity proposing the program to determine whether adequate supervision can be provided, recruitment and retention efforts, and the overall operations of the entity. The Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Council serves in an advisory role for legislation and regulations, recommending changes to update apprenticeship laws.

As of November 28, 2023, there were 11,530 apprentices registered in 125 different occupations, with more than 400 approved registered apprenticeship programs and more than 3,800 employers. There were 1,825 Certificates of Completion for apprentices processed between January 1, 2023, and November 28, 2023. The State added 38 new apprenticeship programs in 2023. The diversity of Maryland's apprenticeship system has also increased since the transfer of the program to DWDAL in 2016. The percentage of minority apprentices increased from 36% in November 2016 to 44% in November 2023. Likewise, the percentage of female apprentices increased from 3.7% in November 2016 to 7.7% in November 2023.

Chapter 168 (Senate Bill 104) of 2023 established the Apprenticeship 2030 Commission. The purpose of the commission is to examine and make recommendations to reduce skill shortages in high-demand occupations and provide affordable training for career pathways for young people by:

- expanding registered apprenticeships in industry sectors with skill shortages;
- growing the number of registered apprentices to at least 60,000 by 2030; and
- reaching the Blueprint for Maryland's Future goal for 45% of high school graduates completing the high school level of a registered apprenticeship.

The Apprenticeship 2030 Commission met four times in 2023 and published the [Interim Report of the Apprenticeship 2030 Commission](#).