



**SB 845 - Higher Education - Maryland Corps Program Fund - Alterations
Testimony of James Knight, Alumnus of Civic Works YouthBuild
On March 4, 2020
Before the Budget & Taxation Committee**

My name is James Knight, and I did a service year with Civic Works' YouthBuild program in Baltimore when I was 22. By the age of sixteen, I was fully supporting myself. And by 22, the stakes were even higher — I had a family of my own to support.

That's when I chose to pursue a career in construction and joined Civic Works' YouthBuild service year program to develop the skills I needed to achieve that goal. I always wanted to do construction work. And serving with Civic Works allowed me to live my dream. To me, construction was much more than an occupation.

Two months into my service year, I was thriving. I was able to gain hands-on construction experience while renovating a house in a low-income community. I installed doors, painted walls and ceilings, waterproofed a basement, and installed a new bathroom sink, vanity and toilet.

Because of my service year, I was able to become a Sherman Williams Certified Painter and earned my OSHA 10-hour Construction certification and Home Builders Institute (HBI) Pre-Apprenticeship Certificate Training (PACT) Certification upon completion of the program.

My service year with Civic Works took my passion and dreams of a career in construction and made it a reality. The skills and certifications I gained through YouthBuild will be invaluable assets throughout my career. I was going through a life changing situation and by serving, I was able to involve myself in something positive — something engaging, and giving back to my community was life-changing.

Today, I work full-time at Civic Works. I couldn't be happier with my choice to serve because it put me on my career path and allowed me to pursue my dreams.

A service year gives people an opportunity to transform their lives and I fully support this bill because it is the first step in affording all young people in Maryland with the same life-changing opportunity to serve that I had.