

MARYLAND WORKFORCE ALLIANCE

HB1487

Public Schools – Agricultural Education and Grant Programs
Position: FAVORABLE

Madame Chair Kaiser and Members of the Ways & Means Committee:

My name is Brig Dumais and I am the Executive Director of the Maryland Workforce Alliance, a statewide membership organization of 36 trade associations, labor unions, and apprenticeship providers. Our members are from all sectors including but not limited to healthcare, automotive, transportation, clean energy, maritime, state employees, service workers, agriculture, cybersecurity, IT, building trades, and more. The Alliance's long term goals are to:

- 1) Double the percent of high school graduates with marketable skills by 2025 through the expansion of high-quality CTE and Youth Apprenticeship programs;
- 2) Expand the percentage of apprenticeship programs in Maryland to approach the average of competitor nations, such as the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia;
- 3) Expand state investment in skills training to levels more comparable to current investment in college preparatory programs;
- 4) Increase high school students' awareness of high skill, high wage careers, and the pathways to obtaining them

We encourage a favorable report on HB1487, establishing the Maryland Agricultural Education Grant Program and requiring county boards of education to implement robust agricultural education programs, and we suggest expanding the registered apprenticeship model in agriculture education. There are currently only 65 youth

participating in registered youth apprenticeship programs in Maryland, and we need to significantly increase that number. HB1487 will help achieve that goal. The more sectors that offer workforce training to high school students, the more career paths young people will be able to pursue in high-wage, high-growth sectors. Agriculture is an especially important industry to support with grant programs and implement a strong curriculum because modern agriculture is multifaceted, involving many different industries than only farming. Investing in agricultural education sets a strong precedent for other industries to expand their workforce training efforts. A highly trained workforce will attract and retain businesses in Maryland, helping to build a strong economy for all.

We thank the Committee for your time and consideration, and we request you issue a favorable report on HB1487.

Respectfully,
Brigette Dumais
Executive Director
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