



**TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE HOUSE ECONOMIC MATTERS COMMITTEE**

**HOUSE BILL 653 -- JOINT COMMITTEE ON WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

**Sponsor: Delegate Qi**

**February 17, 2021**

**DONALD C. FRY**

**PRESIDENT & CEO**

**GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE**

**Position: Support with Amendments**

House Bill 653 creates a new legislative committee composed of five senators and five delegates to oversee workforce development in Maryland. The joint committee would have a variety of responsibilities, including evaluating the condition of Maryland's public and private sector workforce, monitoring skills shortages, identifying strategies to expand employment opportunities, overseeing workforce training funded by the government and the private sector, and reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of career and technology education programs in public schools and institutions of postsecondary education as well as apprenticeship program. The committee would have review over CTE programs, workforce programs under the Maryland Higher Education Commission, the Maryland apprenticeship and training program, the Governor's Workforce Development Board, and other workforce development programs in the state.

The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) is strongly in favor of increased coordination of workforce development efforts throughout the state. We would recommend, with such broad responsibilities beyond traditional oversight responsibilities found in joint committees, that the membership of the committee be changed to include experts from outside of the General Assembly, similar to the Joint Committee on Unemployment Insurance Oversight and the Worker's Compensation Benefit and Insurance Oversight Committee. Additional members should include representative of workforce boards, workforce training programs, community college workforce programs, public school career and technology education programs, private training programs, and representatives of business organizations and employers from relevant industries.

The GBC published *Gaining the Competitive Edge: Keys to Economic Growth and Job Creation in Maryland*, a report that identifies eight core pillars for a competitive business environment and job growth. House Bill 653 is consistent with one of the key pillars of economic growth and job creation:

**Workforce that is highly-educated and meets Maryland's business needs.** Maryland's secondary and higher education institutions must offer access to quality instruction at all levels and cultivate a workforce that is well-suited to a modern economy and to the specific needs of Maryland's business sectors.

House Bill 653 is also consistent with the Greater Baltimore Committee's 2021 Legislative Priorities which encourage policymakers to strengthen education and workforce systems to prioritize equity, accountability, and alignment with Maryland's high-growth industry sectors.

**For these reasons, the Greater Baltimore Committee urges a favorable report with the amendments referenced above on House Bill 653.**

*The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) is a non-partisan, independent, regional business advocacy organization comprised of hundreds of businesses -- large, medium and small -- educational institutions, nonprofit organizations and foundations located in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard counties as well as Baltimore City. The GBC is a 66-year-old, private-sector membership organization with a rich legacy of working with government to find solutions to problems that negatively affect our competitiveness and viability.*

**GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE**

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