



Joint Testimony of the Heating & Air Conditioning Contractors of Maryland (HACC) and the Association of Air Conditioning Professionals (AACCP)

**Before the Maryland Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
March 9th Hearing: SB 845 “Workforce Development Sequence Scholarships Eligibility”**

Position: Favorable

Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and honorable members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 845, the “Workforce Development Sequence Scholarships Eligibility” bill. The Heating & Air Conditioning Contractors of Maryland (HACC) and the Association of Air Conditioning Professionals (AACCP) strongly support this bill, and our organizations respectfully ask for a favorable report from the Committee to expand the eligibility of the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) Workforce Development Sequence Scholarships to include students enrolled directly in registered apprenticeship programs that partner with community colleges in the state. HACC and AACCP also support Senator Benson’s sponsor amendment which makes the legislation more targeted to ensure that the scholarships only apply to registered apprenticeship programs who partner directly with community colleges and to self-funded first-year students who are not employed in the industry yet. **Broadening access to this scholarship will help more Maryland students and transitioning workers access registered apprenticeship programs providing critical career pathways to skilled and in-demand jobs like HVACR.**

The Heating & Air Conditioning Contractors of Maryland (HACC) and the Association of Air Conditioning Professionals (AACCP) are the two trade associations for independent heating, ventilation, air conditioning and refrigeration (HVACR) professionals in Maryland. Together, HACC and AACCP represent **217 companies** across the state of Maryland—companies that represent small businesses and local jobs, as well as a critical skilled workforce providing essential services to homes, businesses, and other facilities.

HACC and AACCP both run HVACR apprenticeship programs that are registered with the Department of Labor’s Maryland Apprenticeship Training Council. Our programs provide both in-classroom instruction and on-the-job training and empower students to earn their journeyman’s license within 4 years, providing them with the skills and training necessary to earn family-sustaining wages in an HVACR career.

- The **HACC Apprenticeship Program** partners with Carroll Community College, Cecil College, Harford Community College, and Howard Community College, and there are currently 270 apprentices enrolled in the program.

- The **AACP Apprenticeship Program** partners with Montgomery County Community College and is actively seeking to expand to additional partnerships. There are currently 166 apprentices enrolled in the program, with 566 individuals who have graduated from the program and received their Journeyman License (over 32 years).

As leaders in apprenticeship training for the HVACR industry, HACC and AACP respectfully urge your support for SB845.

Advance Equity and Support Career Opportunities in Skilled Trades

Broadening the eligibility of the Workforce Development Sequence Scholarship administered by MHEC will help improve access to important training opportunities and career pathways into skilled trades like HVACR. Lack of access to funding is a critical barrier preventing some Marylanders from enrolling in apprenticeship programs like the ones run by our associations—a problem which has only been exacerbated by the pandemic and economic hardship facing our state. This bill is about ensuring that this publicly funded scholarship is helping to improve access and equity. With these changes, the scholarship would especially help low-income students and Marylanders from disadvantaged communities afford to attend these programs.

For example, this year we saw 8 students, 7 of whom were African-American and 1 who was a veteran/transitioning worker, who applied to the HACC Apprenticeship Program and would have been accepted, but ultimately could not enroll because they were unable to come up with the funding (\$2,800 for annual tuition). This is particularly concerning because low-income and minority communities have been some of the hardest hit by the pandemic and economic repercussions, and therefore more likely to be affected by these financial barriers. The \$2,000 award amount provided by this scholarship could make the difference for many students who would not otherwise have the resources to pursue these valuable career pathways.

Currently, the Workforce Development Sequence Scholarship is designed to provide financial assistance to students enrolling in an approved non-credited certificate program leading to apprenticeships, employment, licensure, or job skill enhancement only at a participating Maryland community college.¹ This bill preserves and strengthens that aim by allowing students enrolling in registered apprenticeship programs that partner directly with a Maryland community college to also receive financial support. For HVACR programs in particular, we see a real gap. The College of Southern Maryland and the Community College of Baltimore both offer HVACR programs which are currently eligible for the scholarship, but do not include on-the-job training or lead to licensure. Public dollars can help support opportunity and equity for all communities of Maryland, helping a more diverse group of students enter into these apprenticeship programs. This bill ensures that the Workforce Development Sequence Scholarship most effectively adheres to these goals, expanding equitable access to high-skilled, highly productive careers for Marylanders across the state.

¹ https://mhec.maryland.gov/preparing/Pages/FinancialAid/ProgramDescriptions/prog_workforce.aspx

Conclusion

For all of these reasons, HACC and AACP ask for a FAVORABLE REPORT on SB845 to help more Marylanders gain access to career pathways through registered apprenticeship programs that partner with community colleges and which would otherwise be unaffordable or inaccessible. If enacted, this legislation will help self-pay individuals who truly need the support to pay for their first year in a program prior to employment and set them on a path to in-demand jobs in the HVACR industry and family-sustaining wages.

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