



The Voice of Merit Construction

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TO: ENVIRONMENTAL AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
FROM: ASSOCIATED BUILDERS AND CONTRACTOR
RE: S.B. 414 – CLIMATE SOLUTIONS NOW ACT 2021
POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) supports S.B. 414 which is before you today for consideration. This is wide sweeping legislation that will have a far-reaching impact on our communities and the lives and the welfare of Maryland families.

We're not here to address the science behind this bill. We are not scientists. Our goal is to speak to the tremendous opportunities and challenges a bill like this will have on Maryland's workforce. We are grateful to the committee that they had the foresight to make sure the various work groups established by this legislation will be represented by a broad mix of backgrounds, experiences and perspectives. You have educators, representatives from labor, environmental groups and employers.

As the largest organization in Maryland to represent commercial builders, and the largest provider in the State of multi-craft training programs, we request that we be given a seat as registered apprenticeship sponsors on the Just Transition Employment and Retraining Working Group. ABC's primary mission is to develop the next generation of skilled craft professionals. We are thankful that S.B. 414 was given a favorable report out of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee with our request. It is our sincere hope that the House version will conform with S.B. 414.

Each year we train several thousand individuals in everything from apprenticeship and craft training to safety certification training and management and supervisory education. We work in the schools and have school-to-career programs with Career Technology Education programs across the state.

Our members are leaders in the industry. They are the general contractors who manage the projects. They are the specialty contractors who perform the work and employ the skilled craft professionals who are building Maryland's hospitals, high-tech data centers; schools; multi-family housing projects; office buildings and more.

When asked the most pressing need facing our industry, to a contractor they will answer the demand for skilled labor. And they are saying this now, even in the midst of this pandemic and its accompanying impact on the economy.

The construction industry is on the cusp of its most severe skilled-worker shortage in more than a generation. And when we emerge from the pandemic, you will see a dramatic surge in construction activity. And the certainty of that surge is true even if technology and the industry remain static. But as we all know, there is nothing static about technology. And all of us, regardless of our industry, must evolve and adapt to these changes or risk irrelevance or extinction. And judging by the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2021, Maryland has no intention of remaining static.

Our industry must anticipate this change. But thankfully, the skills we teach – whether its electrical, mechanical; instrumentation; steel erection or any other craft -- are transferable, whether you are building a new school, a hotel or a modern wind turbine.

Again, as the largest construction employer and training organization in Maryland, we ask that the House version conforms with S.B. 414 and be given favorable consideration to our request for a seat on the Employment and Retraining Work Group.

On behalf of the over 1,500 ABC members in Maryland, we look forward to the opportunity to work together to build a well-trained and sustainable workforce for an evolving and sustainable economy.

Marcus Jackson, Director,
Government Affairs