



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE**

March 3, 2022

House Bill 652: More Opportunities for Career-Focused Students Act of 2022

Written Only Testimony

POSITION: FAVORABLE

On behalf of the members of the Health Facilities Association of Maryland (HFAM), we appreciate the opportunity to express our support for House Bill 652. HFAM represents over 170 skilled nursing centers and assisted living communities in Maryland, as well as nearly 80 associate businesses that offer products and services to healthcare providers. Our members provide services and employ individuals in nearly every jurisdiction of the state.

House Bill 652 requires certain county boards of education to consider the pursuit of certain certificates, certifications, or apprenticeships as the equivalent of pursuing postsecondary education; requires certain county boards to provide a method for certain individuals to not authorize the release of a student's personal information and certain results to certain apprenticeship sponsors and employers; and requires a county board to pay for a student to take an apprenticeship or industrial certification exam under certain circumstances.

This legislation would put certain apprenticeship programs on par with traditional college degree programs and requires school systems to assist high school students in preparing for admission to registered apprenticeship programs in a manner similar to how they assist students in preparing for admission to postsecondary institutions.

We support this legislation because workforce recruitment and retention challenges have long existed in healthcare, even before the COVID-19 pandemic. These challenges have only grown worse over the last two years and they will likely remain even as we begin to navigate a post-pandemic world. This legislation is important to ensure that we continue to have solutions to staffing challenges and remove barriers to entry after the pandemic.

Across care settings in Maryland and throughout the country, we fought the most recent surge of the COVID-19 pandemic with fewer people working in healthcare, and particularly fewer people working in skilled nursing and rehabilitation centers.

As we plan our long-term "new normal" in healthcare, we are placing considerable attention on how on-the-job training, apprenticeship programs, trade studies, and traditional post-secondary education can be overlapped to produce more licensed professionals in our setting and in settings across the care continuum.

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Just as there are incremental steps of professional development and job classification in traditional trade apprenticeship approaches, some of us in healthcare are looking at developing similar types of career ladders for our sector.

For these reasons, we request a favorable report from the Committee on House Bill 652.

Submitted by:

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