

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT

Testimony to the Ways and Means Committee

In support of

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

March 3, 2022

Strong Schools Maryland urges a favorable vote on House Bill 652: More Opportunities for Career-Focused Students Act of 2022.

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future envisions a world-class system of public schools for our state's students. Central to this is a network of relevant, aligned career and technical education opportunities for students; a network that will yield apprenticeships, certifications, and even entire careers. In order to achieve the vision of world class schools that produce graduates equipped to thrive in the world, the General Assembly must pass thoughtful legislation like HB652.

This bill:

- Requires public schools to treat career and technical education offerings in the same manner they do early college or post-secondary education offerings;
- Provides students with a resource that allows them to find postsecondary goals and careers that align with their strengths and interests;
- Informs students of employment and skill training opportunities available just as much as they inform students of postsecondary educational options;
- Offer a method that allows students, parents, or guardians to choose to not release a student's personal information out to apprenticeship sponsors or employers;
- Invests in equitable opportunities for students by requiring local school systems to pay for the student's specified apprenticeship entrance or certification exams; and
- Ensures the competitiveness of Maryland's graduates in an increasingly difficult job climate, which is critical to sustaining families and communities.

Currently, Maryland has a 25% average total of high school students that have completed a CTE program of study, earned industry-recognized credentials, or completed a youth or other apprenticeship. This 25% is a little more than halfway away from the state goal of 45% that was established back in 2017. When the data is disaggregated, the number of English Language Learners that have met the requirements is at 11%—less than half of the average total. The number of Black and Hispanic students are also below the average total at 24% and 18% respectively. Now Maryland has less than 3 years to meet that target goal of 45% while still grappling with a pandemic. Students need a more feasible way to achieve the criteria set by the More Jobs for Marylanders Act.

College and career readiness are the end-all, be-all measures of the success of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. By passing House Bill 652, the Maryland General Assembly sets the stage for implementation, our economic future, but more importantly, for our students. We urge a favorable report on House Bill 652.

If you have questions or requests for additional information, you can email:

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