



## House Bill 652

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**Maryland General Assembly**  
**House Ways and Means Committee**

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Joe Horvath  
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Chairman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Joe Horvath, and I am a visiting fellow at Opportunity Solutions Project (OSP). OSP is a non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization dedicated to advancing policies that reduce barriers to work and help people into the jobs they want and need.

Thank you for hearing this legislation before your committee, and for allowing me to submit this testimony in support of House Bill 652.

The importance of HB 652 for Maryland can be summed up in a few numbers: 43,000, 198,000, and 4.

\$43,000 represents the average Marylander's student debt, the second highest in the nation trailing only Washington, D.C.<sup>1</sup> 198,000 represents the estimated total unfilled jobs in Maryland.<sup>2</sup> And four represents the few years each young Marylander has in high school to figure it all out.

Thankfully, HB 652 provides a solution: making sure that young people are allowed to learn about pathways to success, work, and opportunities to secure good-paying jobs in the modern economy. The bill does that by increasing their access to information about apprenticeships and apprenticeship programs offered around the state.

HB 652 is a simple bill, and that is to its benefit. The sponsor identified a shortcoming and created a solution. With nearly 200,000 open jobs estimated to be in Maryland, what better time than now to set up a process to help young people find work?

As for student debt loads, it must be said: there will always be a place for the four-year liberal arts education in America. That is not going away any time soon. Nor should it. In fact, for many young Marylanders, four-year college is the right choice. However, the most common path in America is still found through a job, and it is crucial that resources like those created by HB 652 exist for young people looking to join the trades, get a job, and support themselves right away.

For all these reasons, I urge you to support House Bill 652

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<sup>1</sup> Melanie Hanson, "Student Loan Debt. By State," Education Data Initiative, Aug. 2021, <https://educationdata.org/student-loan-debt-by-state>.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Stebbins, "How the Number of Job Openings in Maryland Compares to the Rest of the US," Southern Maryland Chronicle, February 14, 2022, <https://southernmarylandchronicle.com/2022/02/14/how-the-number-of-job-openings-in-maryland-compares-to-the-rest-of-the-us/>.