

ABC Greater Baltimore Testimony is Support of HB 1122 March 7, 2023

Good afternoon.

Chairs, committee members, thank you for this opportunity to lend our support to House Bill 1122, *Maryland Center for Construction Education and Innovation Fund – Funding – Alteration*.

My name is Mike Henderson and I am the president of the Greater Baltimore Associated Builders and Contractors.

With 650 member firms, we represent more commercial builders than any other organization in Maryland.

And our primary reason for existing is training.

Each year we train nearly 3,000 individuals in everything from electrical to plumbing to project management to operations.

We have the largest multi-craft registered apprenticeship program in Maryland.

And even though the number of people we train has consistently gone up every year for the past several years, we are barely making a dent in the shortage of skilled workers that has plagued this industry for more than 30 years.

The reasons behind the shortage are many, but the primary reason is that where high schools were once the primary on-ramp for a career in the skilled trades, that ramp has long been broken.

This reality was the driver behind creating the Maryland Center for Construction Education and Innovation nearly 15 years ago.

As a founding member of the MCCEI, we knew the industry desperately needed a unifying voice that connects educators, students, job seekers, trade unions and employers.

Although the skilled worker shortage is not new, it is reaching a crisis point, where by 2030, more than 50 percent of the existing workforce is expected to retire. Right now, there is only one new entrant for every four who retire.

The Blueprint for Maryland's future mandates that by 2030, 45 percent of high school students must have work-based experience such as pre-apprentices and have industry credentials by the time they graduate.

At present, the MCCEI engages about 500 students a year. Given they only have two staff members, this is an incredible accomplishment. But it's clearly not enough. This additional funding will enable them to fully staff the organization so that they can expand that outreach to 4000 students a year.

The MCCEI is also fully committed to promoting careers in construction to women, minorities and other non-traditional populations that historically have been underrepresented in the industry.

When you consider that Maryland spends more than \$2 billion annually funding its colleges and universities, yet only 25 percent of Maryland high school graduates will have a college degree, the MCCEI's request to increase their annual funding from the Department of Labor from \$250,000 to \$625,000, is an absolute bargain!

Thank you for having the opportunity to speak today.

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