



March 3, 2023

Support- Maryland Construction Education and Innovation Fund - Funding – Alteration

Dear Chair Barnes and members of the House Appropriations Committee,

My name is Heather Rustici, Senior Vice President of Towson-based construction management firm, Jeffrey Brown Contracting. I am testifying in support of increasing the funds allocated to Maryland Construction Education and Innovation in the annual state budget.

The construction industry is one of boundless opportunities for individuals of varying walks of life. Unfortunately, it is an industry that not everyone has exposure to. Exposure is key to education. You can't pursue what you don't know exists. Having grown up in a small upstate-New York town, in a middle-class family that prioritized education, I appreciate the value of exposure. Despite my parents' best efforts, there were only so many careers I was able to see within our small, somewhat stagnant, town. It wasn't until I moved to Baltimore in pursuit of my master's degree in psychology that I learned about all that exists within the A/E/C industry. It's mere chance that led me to the career I've established today.

I believe we owe it to the next generation to provide them with as much opportunity as possible and exposure to what is available to them. They deserve to know all that is possible so they can find a career that brings them meaning, purpose, and success. Maryland can only stand to thrive from a community of engaged and committed leaders specifically within careers of the built environment.

MCCEI has a mission of educating the younger generations on the careers available within the built environment. Careers that are accessible, reliable, and profitable. Not every student is interested in higher education. Not every student can afford a higher education. Not every student wants to take on insurmountable student debt. There are careers in the built environment that eliminate this. Students that enjoy working with their hands, want more active careers, and that gain satisfaction in seeing progress and change should have the opportunity to know what career opportunities are available to them. Construction offers these opportunities.

By increasing funding for MCCEI, we are providing opportunities to the young people of Maryland who are still searching for their purpose and a meaningful career. House Bill 1122 would be a significant catalyst to improving our education system, providing opportunity to the younger generation, and to supporting an industry that serves its communities through growth and development. It is for these reasons and more that I am in support of House Bill 1122 and asks for a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Heather Rustici

Heather Rustici
Senior Vice President
Jeffrey Brown Contracting, LLC