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Susan O'Neill, Chair

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Testimony in Support of
House Bill 1276 – Public Works Contracts – Apprenticeship Requirements (Maryland
Workforce Apprenticeship Utilization Act)
House Health and Government Operations Committee
February 27, 2024

The Rural Maryland Council supports House Bill 1276 – Public Works Contracts – Apprenticeship Requirements (Maryland Workforce Apprenticeship Utilization Act). This bill proposes changes to the apprenticeship requirements for public works contracts. It requires certain contractors and subcontractors to employ a specified number of qualified apprentices or journeymen to meet a certain percentage for the project. The legislation also amends the dollar value limit for certain projects that are subject to apprenticeship requirements. Additionally, the bill repeals provisions that allowed contractors and subcontractors to make payments in lieu of employing certain apprentices.

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) recognizes the value of apprenticeships and the potential impact they have on growing Maryland's economy and is recognized as an Apprenticeship Ambassador by the Department of Labor.

Apprenticeships develop important pipelines that help retain youth within communities, while enabling them to acquire important skills that can be utilized in the workforce. The Council has long supported apprenticeship programs, such as the Campaign for Historic Trades in 2019. This program was launched by Preservation Maryland and the National Park Services and teaches students the skills to restore and maintain the historic buildings found in National Parks. Approximately 30 apprentices completed this program and 24 landed permanent jobs within the National Park Service. More recently, in 2022 the RMC supported the Shipwright Apprentice Program at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum (CBMM) in St. Michaels, Maryland. CBMM's four-year Shipwright Apprentice Program covers 8,000 hours of real work experience, including instruction and training on joinery techniques, ship layout, ship repair, and construction, as well as leadership and management skill development.

The Rural Maryland Council respectfully requests your favorable support of House Bill 1276.

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) is an independent state agency governed by a nonpartisan, 40-member board that consists of inclusive representation from the federal, state, regional, county, and municipal governments, as well as the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. We bring together federal, state, county, and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to identify challenges unique to rural communities and to craft public policy, programmatic or regulatory solutions.

"A Collective Voice for Rural Maryland"