



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE**

February 14, 2024

House Bill 837: More Opportunities for Career-Focused Students Act of 2024

Written Only Testimony

POSITION: FAVORABLE

On behalf of the members of the Health Facilities Association of Maryland (HFAM), we appreciate the opportunity to express our support for House Bill 837.

HFAM represents skilled nursing centers and assisted living communities in Maryland, as well as associate businesses that offer products and services to healthcare providers. Our members provide services and employ individuals in nearly every jurisdiction of the state. HFAM is affiliated with the American Health Care Association/National Center for Assisted Living (AHCA/NCAL), which is the largest association in the United States representing long-term and post-acute care providers.

This legislation would put certain apprenticeship programs on par with traditional college degree programs and requires school systems to assist high school students in preparing for admission to registered apprenticeship programs similar to how they assist students in preparing for admission to postsecondary institutions.

We support this legislation because workforce recruitment and retention challenges have long existed in healthcare, even before the COVID-19 pandemic. These challenges have only grown worse over the last several years and they will remain even as we navigate a post-pandemic world. This legislation is important to ensure that we continue to find solutions to staffing challenges and remove barriers to entry after the pandemic.

As we plan our long-term “new normal” in healthcare, we are placing considerable attention on how on-the-job training, apprenticeship programs, trade studies, and traditional post-secondary education can be overlapped to produce more licensed professionals across the care continuum. Just as there are incremental steps of professional development and job classification in traditional trade apprenticeship approaches, some of us in healthcare are looking at developing similar types of career ladders for our sector.

Healthcare today faces the greatest shortage and the most tremendous opportunity in workforce development in a generation. To meet this opportunity and succeed, we must deploy new tools and create innovative public-private partnerships.

For these reasons, we request a favorable report from the Committee on House Bill 837.

Submitted by:

Joseph DeMattos, Jr.

President and CEO

(410) 290-5132