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February 14, 2024

Delegate Vanessa Atterbeary, Chair
House Ways and Means Committee
131 House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB 837 – FAVORABLE – More Opportunities for Career-Focused Students Act of 2024

Dear Chair Atterbeary and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Asphalt Association (MAA) is comprised of 19 producer members representing more than 48 production facilities, 25 contractor members, 25 consulting engineer firms and 41 other associate members. MAA works proactively with regulatory agencies to represent the interests of the asphalt industry both in the writing and interpretation of state and federal regulations that may affect our members. We also advocate for adequate state and federal funding for Maryland's multimodal transportation system.

House Bill 837 would expand the advisory role of local school systems by requiring them to assist high school students in researching and applying for employment and skills training opportunities across a wide variety of industries throughout the State similarly to how they assist students in preparing for admission to postsecondary institutions.

MAA supports HB 837 because it will place comparable emphasis on alternative routes to postsecondary education after high school. Vocational training and apprenticeship programs provide students with an excellent option that result in high-paying, high-quality stable careers. Not every student is best suited for traditional post-secondary school. With these changes, they will be notified of, assisted with, and encouraged to pursue alternative options after they graduate, should that be a better fit. We are experiencing a nationwide labor shortage, and this bill will enhance those efforts to increase the workforce by spreading awareness of the numerous options available to high school graduates. The transportation industry would benefit greatly from the influx of a younger, highly trained workforce, and so we support this initiative.

We appreciate you taking the time to address this issue and we respectfully urge a **FAVORABLE** report on House Bill 837.

Sincerely,

Tim E. Smith, P.E.
President
Maryland Asphalt Association