

Renee Lambert
Career Coach
Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation
613 Global Way
Linthicum, MD 21090
rlambert@aawdc.org
March 3, 2025

The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chair
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: Opposition to SB 852 – Protecting Career Counseling for Maryland Students

Dear Chairman Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee and the Budget and Taxation Committee,

Good afternoon, my name is Renee Lambert and I am testifying today in opposition of House Bill 1245 Repealing the Career Counseling Program for Middle and High School Students.

Workforce development is a crucial part of our nation's framework as it equips and readies jobseekers with awareness, knowledge and preparation needed to thrive and progress in their lives and careers and helps bolster local employee pools and strengthen our economies. That being said, the integration of workforce development into schools has become essential and imperative to prepare our students with the skills to be successful in post-secondary education and the workforce alike.

More and more students are realizing that college is not a viable option for them for many reasons and after graduating high school, are just not equipped with the skills needed to successfully enter the workforce and establish longevity in a potential career path. I currently work in a middle school and in my position, I work directly with students, their educators and other schoolhouse supports and allies to increase students' exposure to career exploration and life skills.

Before working in a school setting, I worked under the WIOA program directly with emerging adults aged 18-24. I have had countless experiences with numerous young people that lacked direction, motivation, knowledge, self-awareness, career awareness, and crucial life and employability skills. I worked with them to identify their needs and wants and assisted them in creating an achievable employment plan that ultimately led to a goal of potential long-term employment. Working with young adults helped me to understand just how vital it is to prepare and arm our young people much earlier in their educational journeys and to provide them with the exposure to and awareness of the endless opportunities available to them while helping them begin to determine their post-secondary paths **before** they are faced with certain life challenges at which point some options become increasingly limited. Often because they had no idea that certain options could be available to them, **OR** how to make those options a tangible reality.

I now work in a school that is designated as Title 1 and because of the life challenges that many of our students are facing, they often do not have the necessary support in place of allies that help them see beyond their present situation and encourage them to realistically consider their futures because we are often in crisis and survival mode dealing with every day concerns and challenges. I understand today that in-school career coaching is essential in aiding educators and counselors with identifying and closing the gaps that keep many of our students from realizing and maximizing their potential. Some might think that resources are wasted on students at the middle school level by introducing career exploration while they are not necessarily future-minded. My perspective is that we need to **get** them future-minded and help provide our students with the motivation and awareness to meet the goals they are learning to set for themselves.

The repeal of career coaching would be a disservice to our students who do not know what they do not know and are already faced with limiting beliefs about themselves and their abilities to succeed. As a career coach, my work is both impactful and important to help my students know their options and to not only learn different paths and avenues to success but also to believe in themselves and their abilities enough to follow-through on the path that they choose. We all know and can agree that counselors and teachers cannot do everything for every student with the mounting pressures that are on all of the plates that they are already juggling. Having career coaches in the school houses aids school staff with the many hats they already wear to ensure that our students are not overlooked but instead have additional support to help them achieve the **standard** of college and career readiness.

Our work is necessary, impactful and will help strengthen our state's future in ways that cannot and should not be overlooked by this potential repeal. Our children **are** our future, and we should be looking for every way possible to add to the assurance of their success, not detract from it. Thank you for your time and your consideration.

Sincerely,

Renee Lambert
Career Coach
Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation

[Your Name]
Career Coach
[Organization/Workforce Board Name]
[Address]
[City, State, ZIP]
[Email]
[Date]

The Honorable Ben Barnes, Chair
House Appropriations Committee
120 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: Opposition to HB 1461 – Protecting Career Counseling for Maryland Students

Dear Chairman Barnes and Members of the House Appropriations Committee and the Ways & Means Committee,

As a career coach working directly with Maryland's students, I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB 1461, which would eliminate the Career Counseling Program for Middle and High School Students. This program is critical in preparing young people for their future careers, connecting them with real-world workforce opportunities, employer networks, and in-demand

career pathways. Eliminating it would be a significant step backward for Maryland's students, workforce, and economy.

As a career coach, I work with students, employers, and educators to ensure young people understand career options, apprenticeships, and workforce training opportunities. Removing this program would:

- **Hurt students** by limiting their access to career exploration, job readiness training, and employer connections.
- **Hurt employers** who rely on a skilled talent pipeline to meet workforce demands in high-growth industries.
- **Hurt Maryland's economy**, as students graduate without clear pathways into family-sustaining careers, leading to higher unemployment and skills gaps.

Rather than eliminating a program that is already proving successful, Maryland should be investing further in career coaching and workforce-aligned career counseling. I urge you to reject HB 1461 and preserve the Career Counseling Program for Middle and High School Students. Maryland must continue investing in the future of its students, ensuring they have the knowledge, skills, and support necessary to thrive in their careers and contribute to our state's economy.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome the opportunity to share more about how career coaching is positively impacting students across Maryland.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

Career Coach

[Organization/Workforce Board Name]

[Your Name]
Career Coach
[Organization/Workforce Board Name]
[Address]
[City, State, ZIP]
[Email]
[Date]

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[Your Name]

Career Coach

[Organization/Workforce Board Name]

