

House Bill 501
Registered Apprenticeship Investments for a Stronger Economy (RAISE) Act
Economic Matters Committee
February 27th 2025
Favorable

Catholic Charities of Baltimore strongly supports HB501, a critical piece of legislation that will significantly enhance workforce development and apprenticeship opportunities across Maryland. This bill represents a pivotal step in strengthening apprenticeship programs, fostering economic mobility, and bridging the skills gap in key industries.

For over a century, Catholic Charities has provided care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. We accompany individuals as they age with dignity, support their pursuit of employment and career advancement, help them heal from trauma and addiction, and prepare them for educational success. We also offer a welcoming environment for immigrant neighbors joining our communities.

As the largest private provider of human services in Maryland, one of the six core pillars driving our mission is *Empowering Careers*. Access to steady employment is vital for individuals to support themselves and their families. Our job training programs connect skilled workers with employers who need their expertise, offering intensive training, job-readiness assistance, and professional development. At the Christopher Place Employment Academy, for example, we provide a resident-focused employment academy that helps men transition from homelessness to permanent, stable housing and equips them to obtain and maintain full-time employment, free of addiction. Similarly, My Brother's Keeper in West Baltimore offers community-based services, including workforce development, alongside daily meals, supporting residents in their journey toward economic self-sufficiency.

As an organization committed to workforce development, we believe the provisions outlined in HB501 will enhance job readiness, stimulate economic growth, and expand the talent pipeline for Maryland employers by providing targeted support and resources to both job seekers and employers.

Some of the key benefits of this legislation include:

1. **Streamlined Licensing Process** – By waiving examination requirements for individuals who complete state-approved apprenticeship programs, this bill accelerates workforce entry for qualified professionals.
2. **Expanded Apprenticeship Support** – Establishing the Maryland Office of Registered Apprenticeship Development and the Registered Apprenticeship Qualified Intermediary Program will increase outreach, technical assistance, and statewide visibility for apprenticeship programs.
3. **Financial Incentives for Employers** – The Maryland Apprenticeship Incentive Program Fund will provide financial support to employers, offsetting training costs and encouraging broader participation in apprenticeship programs.
4. **Improved Data & Reporting** – Mandating annual reporting on program outcomes will ensure transparency, track completion rates, and inform policy decisions based on measurable results.

For these reasons, Catholic Charities of Baltimore urges the committee to issue a favorable report for HB501.

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