

MARYLAND WORKFORCE ALLIANCE



Registered Apprenticeship Investments for a Stronger Economy (RAISE) Act

HB 501

Position: FAVORABLE

February 27, 2025

Dear Chair Wilson and Members of the Economic Matters Committee:

The Maryland Workforce Alliance, the Statewide organization of labor unions, non-profits, and trade associations, is committed to promoting a world-class workforce in Maryland by bridging skills gaps and addressing critical employment shortages in key fields. We strive to expand registered youth apprenticeship programs, robust high school Career & Technical Education (CTE) programs, and post-high school skills throughout industry.

We urge a FAVORABLE report on HB 501. The Bill is consistent with our mission to promote and support apprenticeships throughout the State.

HB 501 would establish the Maryland Office of Registered Apprenticeship Development to market and advance the registered apprenticeship system throughout the State. Expanded access to affordable, high quality apprenticeship programs in targeted, highly in-demand fields will provide an influx of young workers with relevant skills into the State economy. Occupations or fields currently lacking enough skilled workers would expand, and new or emerging industries would benefit from a ready pool of trained and experienced workers. Maryland will receive many benefits from an expanded, skilled, and enthusiastic pool of workers who complete apprenticeships and enter the workforce ready to start adding to the State economy.

We applaud the Bill's introduction of automatic licensure for apprentices who complete the multiple years of on-the-job training and hundreds of hours of rigorous classroom instruction. Individuals who have demonstrated proficiency under the guidance of a journeyperson should not have to sit for a written licensing exam, another obstacle that delays the entry of qualified workers into the workforce.

Further, and especially due to the increasing costs of higher education, many individuals will benefit from SB 431 because it would establish the Maryland Apprenticeship Incentive Program which will make grants to employers to reimburse them for costs. Apprentices can enter the workforce faster, confident in their skills and without the financial burden of educational loans.

For these reasons, we support HB 501 and urge a favorable report.

Respectfully,
Jennifer Dewees, Board Chair
Maryland Workforce Alliance