

Good Afternoon Chairman Wilson and Members of the Economic Matters Committee.

Thank you for allowing me the time to testify in support for HB 1017, the Apprenticeship Utilization Act 2025. My name is Syreeta-Kai Cosey and I am a member of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT), District Council 51 Local 963; I am a proud Architectural and Metal Worker! As a newly graduated apprentice from the Commercial Painters Program at the IUPAT, I believe that this legislation holds the key to shaping a brighter future for future apprentices and the entire construction workforce in Maryland.

This legislation emphasizes diversity and inclusion within the construction industry, providing opportunities for individuals like me who may have faced barriers in the past. It creates a more accessible pathway for women, minorities, and individuals from different backgrounds to enter and thrive in the construction trades.

As someone who was transitioning careers, job security was of utmost importance. The Act's focus on apprenticeship utilization not only secures our present opportunities but also ensures a thriving workforce for years to come. By investing in apprenticeships, it has allowed myself and others to contribute to the long-term success and sustainability of the construction industry in Maryland.

My experience as an apprentice has been marked not only by skill development but also personal growth. The Act reinforces the importance of our roles, encouraging a sense of commitment and professionalism that extends beyond our apprenticeship period. It sets the stage for a fulfilling and promising career in the construction trades.

The relationships fostered throughout the four-year program gave me the confidence I needed to become more actively involved in my IUPAT community. I realized that completing the program wasn't just for my benefit, but also for the three women now enrolled in the apprenticeship program and for all the men who were eager for growth in ways that were uncommon for our trade.

I'm proud to say that upon completing my apprenticeship, I was offered the opportunity to transition into an office role, where I now serve as an Estimator/ Project Manager. Just 4 years ago, I started out using hand tools and now I am reading drawings and bidding on projects which allows for my coworkers to have employment and walk onto jobsites as I did just last year.

I want to thank Delegate Wells for sponsoring HB 1017 the Apprenticeship Utilization Act. As a former apprentice, I support this legislation, knowing that it will continue to positively impact my journey and contribute to the overall success and vitality of the construction industry for women and all workers from all walks of life in our great state.

I urge you to support HB 1017.

Thank you