



Empowering People to Lead Systemic Change

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DisabilityRightsMD.org

## ECONOMIC MATTERS COMMITTEE

### TESTIMONY OF DISABILITY RIGHTS MARYLAND

#### HOUSE BILL 501 – Registered Apprenticeship Investments for a Stronger Economy (RAISE) Act

February 27, 2025

**Position: Support**

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM) is the protection and advocacy organization for the state of Maryland; the mission of the organization, part of a national network of similar agencies, is to advocate for the legal rights of people with disabilities throughout the state. DRM envisions a world where people with disabilities are fully included in the workplace, neighborhoods and all aspects of community life. We help people with disabilities pursue opportunities to participate fully in all aspects of community life, and champion their rights to self-determination, dignity, equality, opportunity, and freedom from discrimination and harm. For this reason, **DRM supports House Bill 501**, which would authorize the State Board of Plumbing to waive the license examination requirement for a journey plumber license; authorize the Secretary of Labor to waive the examination for certain licenses; and establish the Maryland Office of Registered Apprenticeship Development to market and advance the registered apprenticeship system throughout the State.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, individuals with any disability are much less likely to be employed than their counterparts without disabilities.<sup>1</sup> The unemployment rate in 2023, defined as “those who did not have a job, were available for work, and were actively looking for a job in the 4 weeks preceding the survey” was twice as high for individuals with disabilities as those without, 7.2% compared to 3.5% respectively. One cause of this disparity is barriers to post-secondary education, including training programs and licensing exams.

By authorizing the State Board of Plumbing to waive the licensing exam requirement for a journey plumber who has successfully completed an apprenticeship program, and by authorizing the Secretary of the Department of Labor to similarly waive examination for applicants who have completed other registered apprenticeship programs approved by the Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning, HB 501 will remove the barrier of examination for qualified individuals with disabilities who have successfully completed apprenticeship programs and have otherwise satisfied their requirements for

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<sup>1</sup> [Persons with a Disability: Labor Force Characteristics—2023, Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor.](#)

licensure. Authorizing the State Board of Plumbing to waive the license examination requirement for a journey plumber license and authorizing the Secretary of Labor to waive the examination for certain other licenses will streamline the process for qualified individuals to enter the workforce and begin working in their industries.

For these reasons, DRM **supports HB 501.**

For more information or with questions, please contact Megan Jones at [meganc@disabilityrightsmd.org](mailto:meganc@disabilityrightsmd.org).