



February 25, 2025

The Honorable C.T. Wilson
Chair, House Economic Matters Committee
230 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: Support for HB 501 RAISE ACT– With Clarifying Amendment

Dear Chairman Wilson and Members of the House Economic Matters Senate Committee;

I am writing to express my strong support for HB501 with clarifying amendments as it seeks to enhance and expand Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) in Maryland. As the Chief Operating Officer of Hamilton-Ryker, I have seen firsthand the transformative impact of apprenticeship programs on workforce development and the lives of so many.

Through our workforce development division, TalentGro, we serve as a federal and state sponsor and intermediary for RAPs, supporting over 800 unique employer locations nationwide and managing over 7,700 healthcare and other industry apprentices. We also provide comprehensive support and case management services critical to improving outcomes.

We are deeply committed to expanding access to high-quality apprenticeship opportunities, particularly for underrepresented populations, including those in foster care, individuals aging out of the system, and our transitioning military community. Currently, we manage nearly 500 apprentices in Maryland, a number that continues to grow steadily. However, funding instability hinders our efforts. Additionally, Maryland lacks direct funding to support the development of high-quality apprenticeship programs. Existing funds are allocated primarily to education providers and employers, overlooking the critical role of a qualified intermediary. Intermediaries play a vital role in collaborating with both groups to build registered apprenticeship programs that meet regulatory standards, navigate the approval process, and oversee successful implementation.

HB501 represents a critical step in strengthening and solidifying Maryland's apprenticeship system. However, I encourage the Committee to clarify that **qualified intermediaries** with proven expertise in apprenticeship program management can also serve as program sponsors. Too often, employers or educational providers simply do not have the time or expertise to interact with the Dept of Labor. Qualified intermediaries like us have the proven track record and expertise to scale these programs to your desired numbers. Additionally, **reimbursable**

costs for qualified intermediaries should explicitly include expenses related to program development, management, and compliance with the regulations governing RAPs. These provisions will ensure that experienced intermediaries can continue providing high-quality apprenticeship opportunities while meeting the rigorous standards for program success.

Consideration should be given to removing the language restricting this legislation to “newly” registered apprentices within their first year after completing seven months of employment. This wording is overly restrictive for employers, provides minimal training opportunities, and prevents this tool from being used to retain or upskill existing workers.

I appreciate your leadership in advancing this critical legislation. My team and I welcome the opportunity to serve as a resource as the bill progresses. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide further insights or assistance. I can be reach at sfraney@hamilton-ryker.com.

Sincerely,

Shari Franey

Shari Franey

Chief Operating Officer

Cc: Ruth Patterson; TalentGro Director
Mary Ann Lisanti, Consultant