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## Economic Matters Committee

**To:** Chairman C. T. Wilson, Vice Chair Brian M. Crosby, and Members of the Economic Matters Committee

**From:** Charlie Petrovia, Training Director, Plumbers and Steamfitter Local 486 Apprenticeship

### **Support with Amendment HB 501 – Registered Apprenticeship Investments for a Stronger Economy (RAISE) Act**

On behalf of the United Association of Plumbers and Steamfitters Local 486 Apprenticeship Training School, which represents 400 Plumbers, Steamfitters, Welders, and HVAC Techs apprentices across Maryland, I ask you to **SUPPORT HB 501 with Amendment.**

As an organization, we have concerns regarding several aspects of the proposed legislation. At the Plumbers and Steamfitters Local 486, our apprenticeships are a point of pride. Our members complete a rigorous five-year program, which includes over 1,200 hours of classroom instruction and 10,000 hours of on-the-job training. Our programs throughout the United Association are widely regarded as the gold standard for registered apprenticeship programs across the country. However, being a “registered” program should only be the baseline requirement. Apprentices graduating from the program must possess a deep knowledge of their craft, along with a solid understanding of the plumbing and fuel gas codes, which are integral to their training. The only way to ensure this is through a licensing exam based on the code, as it is already being implemented. We respectfully urge that the exemption for this exam be removed from the legislation.

The importance of maintaining a 1:1 ratio of journeymen to apprentices on job sites cannot be overstated. A journeyman is responsible for ensuring the apprentice completes their tasks safely, thereby protecting the public, the apprentice, and other workers on site. The current ratio is already quite low, and any reduction in this ratio could compromise public safety and the overall quality of work in the industry. Plumbing and gas fitting are complex and increasingly sophisticated trades, incorporating modern tools, materials, and systems. A seasoned journeyman should supervise no more than one apprentice to ensure proper mentoring. This approach has been effective for over a century and should not be arbitrarily reduced. As we know, improperly installed or maintained plumbing, or gas systems can be dangerous and may lead to loss of life or property. The consequences of this ill-considered bill, which has not been adequately evaluated, would directly result in such risks.

Finally, while we support funding for pre-apprenticeship and CTE programs, we are concerned that contractors or intermediaries may exploit the system by continually firing and rehiring apprentices to keep collecting tax incentives. Contractors involved in an apprenticeship program share the cost of training their apprentices with the journeymen who supervise their on-the-job learning. This arrangement ensures that both contractors and workers have a vested interest in properly training the next generation of plumbers.

We urge you to support **HB 501** with the amendment.

Sincerely,

