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Written Testimony in Opposition to Senate Bill 852

Submitted to the Maryland Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

March 5, 2025

Chairperson Feldman, Vice Chairperson Kagan, and Members
of the Committee,

I am Kate Wolfson, representing Baltimore's Promise, a collective impact organization dedicated to improving career pathways for young people in Baltimore through initiatives like CareerBound, which is on target to put more than 8,300 youth on the path to economic self-sufficiency by 2030. I submit this testimony in strong **opposition to Senate Bill 852**, which repeals the Career Counseling Program for Middle and High School Students and the associated funding.

Career counseling is a **critical bridge between education and employment**, helping students make informed decisions about their futures. The current framework ensures that students receive **individualized career guidance**, access to **high-quality apprenticeships**, and exposure to **diverse career opportunities** that align with Maryland's workforce needs. **Repealing these provisions, as proposed in SB852, would remove a vital support system for students across the state.**

In the past six months of the current school year, **Baltimore Career Coaching Initiative has connected with more than 17,000 Baltimore City youth, providing individualized career coaching to youth in grades 6-12 in 115 Baltimore City Public Schools, helping students to better identify, explore, and plan for their post-secondary career aspirations.** At Baltimore's Promise, we have seen firsthand how effective career counseling benefits young people:

- **Our first school-to-apprenticeship student** was identified, met all readiness requirements for an adult apprenticeship, and has begun his path to a sustainable career.

- **Paid internships with the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA)** provided students at Edmondson-Westside High School with hands-on experience and direct pathways into transportation careers; youth voice is now contributing to the red line project as a result.
- **CareerBound partners with local employers and the workforce development board** to ensure students receive **mentorship, work-based learning, and access to living-wage jobs** upon graduation.

By dismantling existing career counseling infrastructure, SB852 would disproportionately harm students from **historically underserved communities** who rely on these programs for economic mobility.

We also encourage **collaboration among workforce boards and school systems statewide** to develop a **coordinated approach** that strengthens career counseling rather than dismantling it. **Baltimore City has been an exemplar for career counseling**, demonstrating the early success that deep collaboration has produced between the Mayor's Office of Employment Development, Baltimore City Public Schools, and Baltimore City Community College.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge an **unfavorable** report on SB852.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Kate E. Wolfson, Esq.
Director, CareerBound
Baltimore's Promise