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Anne Arundel Workforce
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Kirkland Murray, Executive Director

Baltimore City

Mayor's Office of Employment
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MacKenzie Garvin, Director

Baltimore County

Baltimore County Department of
Economic and Workforce
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Jonathan Sachs, Director

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Carroll County Workforce
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Heather Lee Powell, Manager

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Frederick County Workforce
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Michelle Day, Director

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Howard County Office of Workforce
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Stephanie Adibe, Director

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*Leslie Porter-Cabell, Workforce
Director*

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WorkSource Montgomery, Inc.
*Anthony Featherstone, Executive
Director*

Prince George's County

Prince George's County Workforce
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*Walter Simmons, Executive
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Southern Maryland Job Source
(Calvert, Charles, & St. Mary's
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Ruthy Davis, Director

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Susquehanna Workforce Network,
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Kimberly Justus, Executive Director

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*Dan McDermott, Interim Executive
Director*

Western Maryland

Western Maryland Consortium
(Allegany, Garrett &
Washington Counties)
*Amos McCoy, Interim Executive
Director*

The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chair
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: Support for House Bill 772

Dear Chairman Feldman, Vice Chari Kagan and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Maryland Workforce Association (MWA), representing the state's thirteen local workforce development boards, we are writing to express our strong support for House Bill 772. This legislation is essential to strengthening Maryland's career counseling system by integrating workforce development boards into the career guidance process—a proven model that is gaining national recognition.

Local workforce development boards serve as key connectors between education and industry, ensuring that career counseling is informed by real-time labor market data, employer needs, and in-demand career pathways. By continuing this partnership, House Bill 772 will enhance career readiness and workforce alignment across the state.

The impact of this approach is already evident:

Over 200 workforce professionals have been dispatched to middle and high schools across Maryland to provide career guidance.

More than 190,000 students have been reached in just the first year, providing them with valuable insights into career pathways, apprenticeships, and training opportunities.

Maryland is leading the way, with other states looking to replicate this workforce-driven career counseling model.

By continuing and strengthening the partnerships between workforce boards, schools, and businesses, House Bill 772 will ensure that students and job seekers receive career guidance tailored to workforce needs, ultimately strengthening Maryland's economy and closing skills gaps in high-growth industries.

The Maryland Workforce Association urges your support for House Bill 772 to sustain and expand this initiative. Thank you for your leadership in ensuring that Maryland continues to lead the nation in innovative workforce solutions. We welcome the opportunity to further discuss the positive outcomes this legislation will create.

Sincerely,

Kirkland Murray, President
Maryland Workforce Association

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Let's strengthen career readiness for students across Maryland together



KIRKLAND MURRAY



BRANDON BUTLER

MARCH 27, 2025 4:39 AM





📷 A vocational school student practices welding in this file photo. (Photo by Senior Airman Nichelle Anderson/U.S. Air Force)

As Maryland continues to adapt to a rapidly changing job market, we must equip our students with the tools they need to succeed. House Bill 772, currently before the Maryland General Assembly, presents an opportunity to strengthen career readiness for middle and high school students by ensuring dedicated funding for the Career Counseling Program, a program established nearly two years ago through Pillar 3 of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

As representatives of the Maryland Workforce Association, we strongly support this bill and urge

legislators to pass it without delay.

Too many students graduate without a clear plan for their future, unsure of what careers align with their skills and interests. Many are unaware of the diverse job opportunities available in their home counties and in Maryland, including those in high-demand fields like health care, information technology and skilled trades. Without proper career guidance, students may end up underemployed or disengaged from the workforce altogether.

At the same time, Maryland faces a growing skills gap. Employers are struggling to find qualified workers, and many high-paying jobs go unfilled simply because young people are not aware of these career paths. Early exposure to career options and individualized counseling can bridge this gap, ensuring that students make informed decisions about their futures while strengthening our state's workforce.

HB 772 will ensure that local workforce development boards continue to receive dedicated funding to support the Career Counseling Program in schools. If passed, the bill requires county boards of education to

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allocate funds based on student enrollment, with a per student amount that adjusts for inflation each fiscal year. These resources will enable us to continue to provide individualized career planning, connecting students with employers, internships, apprenticeships, and vocational training programs.

One of the Blueprint's most significant advantages, which would be shored up in passing this bill, is its emphasis on collaboration. By leveraging the expertise and resources of Maryland's workforce development boards, we can provide better support to county public schools, which often lack the capacity to fully

guest commentary submissions at editor@marylandmatters.org.

We suggest a 750-word limit and reserve the right to edit or reject submissions. We do not accept columns that are endorsements of candidates, and no longer accept submissions from elected officials or political candidates.

implement career coaching programs on their own. Workforce boards bring connections to employers, access to industry-specific training programs and a deep understanding of regional labor market needs.

To date, local workforce boards have collectively hired more than 200 professionals to provide career counseling and guidance in middle and high schools across the state. In addition, over 190,000 students were reached through workforce-led career counseling in the program's first year alone. This collaborative approach ensures that students receive comprehensive, real-world career guidance that school systems

Opinion pieces must be signed by at least one individual using their real name. We do not accept columns signed by an organization. Commentary writers must include a short bio and a photo for their bylines.

Views of writers are their own.

alone often struggle or do not have the bandwidth to provide.

As we know, there are many conversations surrounding budget and cost as Gov. Wes Moore and the General Assembly work to address the \$3 billion deficit we currently face. The Blueprint and funding for its various pillars have not been safe from the conversation. However, the reality is that the long-term benefits of career coaching far outweigh the initial investment. By preventing career missteps and reducing the number of graduates who struggle with job instability, we create a more self-sufficient and prosperous workforce.

Maryland has a responsibility to prepare its students for success in an increasingly competitive job market. Protecting the funding for career counseling established by the Blueprint through passing House Bill 772 is a vital step in achieving this goal, will ensure the fruits of this hard work aren't lost and that students will continue to benefit from the program. We urge lawmakers to support this legislation and invest in the future of our students and our state.

Together, we can create a stronger workforce, a more resilient economy, and brighter futures for Maryland's young people. Now is the time to act – let's keep career readiness a priority.

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**KIRKLAND
MURRAY**

Kirkland Murray is the president of the Maryland Workforce Association, representing 13 local workforce boards throughout the state of Maryland.

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AUTHOR****BRANDON BUTLER**

Brandon Butler is the executive director of the Maryland Workforce Association, representing 13 local workforce boards throughout the state of Maryland.

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