
MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF LABOR TESTIMONY - SENATE BILL 431

TO: Senate Finance Committee
FROM: Secretary Portia Wu, Maryland Department of Labor
DATE: 2/19/2025
BILL: Registered Apprenticeship Investments for a Stronger Economy (RAISE) Act

Moore-Miller Administration Position: Support

The RAISE Act of 2025 is an essential investment in Registered Apprenticeships (RA) that will support Maryland's economic growth, help businesses to meet their talent needs and enable Maryland residents to find fulfilling, high-demand, family-supporting careers that enable them to thrive.

Registered Apprenticeships are a gold standard of career preparation, blending classroom instruction with hands-on, mentor-guided (or "journey person") training in real-world settings. This model fosters the development of a highly skilled workforce that enhances productivity, improves job site safety, and reduces turnover. With RAs, employers can cultivate talent internally, creating a pipeline of workers ready to meet evolving industry demands.

The Moore-Miller Administration has made growing Registered Apprenticeship a cornerstone of its economic growth and competitiveness strategy. While Maryland has long been a leader in this arena, a strategic shift is needed to accelerate the growth of apprenticeship. The Administration's approach draws upon ideas surfaced in the Apprenticeship 2030 Commission discussions and the views of leading thinkers and stakeholders. It is focused on:

- building upon the outstanding models that have been developed over many decades through labor-management cooperation;
- expanding apprenticeships in new industries – lighthouse sectors such as aerospace and IT, as well as foundational sectors without which the rest of our economy cannot function – teaching, nursing, energy, and infrastructure;
- providing incentives and making it easier for employers and small businesses to join, scale up, or create new apprenticeship programs;
- leveraging state dollars to support apprenticeship programs; and
- providing more connections to apprenticeships from high schools and colleges.

The RAISE Act is the keystone to the success of this strategy. Specifically, the bill would support the growth of Registered Apprenticeship through **five key approaches**:

1. Establishes the Maryland Office of Registered Apprenticeship Development (“MORAD”) within the Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Program of the Department of Labor

The Maryland Office of Registered Apprenticeship Development (“MORAD”) will coordinate the promotion of Registered Apprenticeships to businesses. More specifically, the Office will be charged with developing, sustaining, and tracking Registered Apprenticeship opportunities and will be empowered to do so by the programs proposed in the sections below. This Office will be located within the Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Program, staffed by state employees, and will complement the office’s regulatory quality assurance work.

2. Establishes the Registered Apprenticeship Qualified Intermediary Program

Apprenticeship Intermediaries play a critical role in supporting the development and expansion of Registered Apprenticeship programs, particularly in non-traditional industries and for small businesses. This legislation will support the development of intermediaries to create self-sustaining apprenticeship infrastructure in new industries by connecting employers, apprentices and potential apprentices, training providers, and the State to provide information to drive quality, innovation, and transparency in Registered Apprenticeship partnerships.

3. Establishes the Maryland Apprenticeship Incentive Program (“MAIP”)

The initial costs for employers to start a Registered Apprenticeship program can be daunting, creating a significant barrier to expanding the number of apprenticeships offered in Maryland. The Maryland Apprenticeship Incentive Program seeks to address this by offering financial assistance in the form of grants to employers to offset the costs of establishing or scaling a RA program.

4. Creates Opportunity to Expand Journeyman-to-Apprentice Ratios

This section establishes a default, minimum journey person-to-apprentice ratio of 1:1. Establishing Maryland's minimum ratio as 1:1 will protect the essential safety and quality of Registered Apprentices and will allow for exceptions only when prudent.

Second, this section creates an expedited pathway for the Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Council ("MATC") to consider expanded ratios for certain **nonhazardous** occupations. Under current practice, Registered Apprenticeship program sponsors can request a deviation from the 1:1 ratio, but they must wait at least one year from the time that their apprenticeship program becomes registered. This proposal will allow sponsors of programs in nonhazardous occupations to submit requests to MATC at the point of registration rather than waiting a year. This is expected to remove barriers and make RAs more appealing to non-traditional industries, like cybersecurity, while maintaining quality evaluations by MATC, including safety analysis, union sign-off for collectively bargained occupations, and other measures.

5. Repeals the Youth Apprenticeship Advisory Committee

This final section seeks to repeal the Youth Apprenticeship Advisory Committee. The initial purpose of the Committee has been met and there is no longer a need for an advisory group. Future planning related to connecting Maryland's youth to Registered Apprenticeship opportunities is now covered by the Career and Technical Education ("CTE") Committee and the Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Council.

The original draft of this legislation included a provision to begin a process of requiring automatic licensure by relevant occupational licensing boards upon completion of a Registered Apprenticeship, beginning with requiring the State Board of Plumbing to adopt the same automatic licensure provision that the Maryland State Board of Electricians and the Maryland Board of Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Contractors already have. After thorough discussions with stakeholders, however, it was determined that more input is needed to develop this potential approach. Accordingly, this provision has been stricken from the legislation.

The RAISE Act of 2025 is a critical component of Maryland's workforce and economic growth and competitiveness strategy. The Department respectfully requests a favorable report on SB0431.