

TO: Senate Committee on Finance

BILL: Senate Bill 0431- Registered Apprenticeship Investments for a Stronger Economy (RAISE) Act

DATE: February 19, 2025

POSITION: Support

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the State Board of Education support Senate Bill 431. This bill seeks to streamline licensing requirements for journey plumbers, restructure the Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Program by establishing new offices and incentive programs, and repeal the Youth Apprenticeship Advisory Committee while enhancing registered apprenticeship development efforts within the state. MSDE recognizes the importance of policies that align with Blueprint Pillar 3 goals, and we appreciate the bill's commitment to expanding high-quality opportunities for young people to connect with the world of work.

MSDE strongly supports the following provisions in this bill:

- **The Development of a State-Qualified Intermediary Program** – MSDE supports the establishment of this program and emphasizes the importance of our role in evaluating and selecting intermediaries whose applications involve working with youth or school professionals.
- **Collaboration Across Key State Agencies** – We strongly support the requirement for collaboration among the Secretary of Labor, the Governor's Workforce Development Board, and the Department of Commerce in developing the qualified intermediary program. MSDE's inclusion is particularly important when initiatives involve opportunities or strategies that integrate with academic programs of study, ensuring a coordinated alignment between K-12 education and Maryland's broader workforce development strategy.
- **The Establishment of the Maryland Apprenticeship Incentive Program** – This program will expand pathways for students and employers to engage in apprenticeships, directly supporting MSDE's commitment to enhancing career-connected learning opportunities and strengthening Maryland's workforce pipeline.

These components align with our mission of Blueprint goals to ensure all students have access to high-quality educational and career pathways that prepare them for postsecondary success.

We have the following input on implementation for provisions in the bill:

- **Shared Accountability** – MSDE believes that clearly defined accountability systems across Maryland are essential for guiding the implementation of the Blueprint and ensuring meaningful outcomes for all agencies involved in developing talent pipelines. We request the inclusion of specific, well-defined metrics for partner agencies, similar to

those established under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, to ensure the newly established office develops a measurable and transparent strategy for advancing the registered apprenticeship system statewide.

- **Funding Allocation for Youth-Focused Incentives** – The bill proposes a \$5,000,000 annual appropriation from the Governor's budget between 2027-2030 to support the Maryland Apprenticeship Incentive Program. MSDE strongly recommends that a portion of this funding be explicitly allocated for youth-focused apprenticeship incentives, ensuring targeted investments in the high school level of a registered apprenticeship program, as outlined in existing law and policy.

We encourage further discussion to refine these provisions in a way that ensures alignment with Maryland's educational goals.

MSDE appreciates the leadership of the General Assembly in advancing policies that strengthen Maryland's coordinated education and workforce strategy. We look forward to continued collaboration to refine and implement this bill in a way that ensures the best outcomes for students, educators, and employers across the state.

We respectfully request that you consider this information as you deliberate SB 0431. For further information, please contact Dr. Akilah Alleyne at 410- 767-0504, or akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov