TESTIMONY OF YONIS BONILLA

ORGANIZER, MID ATLANTIC PIPE TRADES ASSOCIATION

IN SUPPORT OF THE MARYLAND APPRENTICESHIP AND PREVAILING WAGE

TRANSPARENCY ACT (SB3 / HB850)

FAVORABLE

Dear Chairs Pene-Melnyk and Beidle, and Members of the House Government Operations Committee and Senate Finance Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of the Maryland Apprenticeship and Prevailing Wage Transparency Act. As an Organizer with the Mid Atlantic Pipe Trades Association, I spend my days visiting construction sites, talking with workers about their rights, union representation, and industry standards. These conversations often reveal troubling realities—workers who are not being paid what they are owed, who have been misclassified by their employers, or who are facing other labor violations. When workers tell me they aren't receiving their proper wages under Maryland's prevailing wage laws, I help them navigate the process of filing complaints with the Maryland Department of Labor, the Maryland and D.C. Attorneys General, and the U.S. Department of Labor. In cases of misclassification, licensing violations, or overtime abuse, I connect them with legal counsel to pursue their rights.

Wage theft and worker misclassification are not abstract problems—they are realities I encounter every day. Contractors who misclassify workers as independent contractors do so to avoid paying taxes, workers' compensation, and overtime, shifting the burden onto workers and law-abiding businesses. Without proper oversight, these practices persist, undercutting honest contractors and denying workers the wages and protections they are due. Workers frequently report that they are not receiving the required prevailing wage, are being paid under the table, or are forced to work overtime without proper compensation. Without a transparent payroll records database, these violations remain hidden, and enforcement is inconsistent at best.

The creation of a certified apprenticeship and prevailing wage database is essential. Similar measures in New York have resulted in a 21% increase in recovered lost wages and a significant reduction in worker misclassification violations. Nevada's apprenticeship tracking system has led to a 12% increase in program completion rates and better compliance from apprenticeship sponsors. Maryland stands to benefit in the same way—ensuring fair competition, workforce accountability, and economic integrity.

I know firsthand how critical this legislation is. I see the consequences of weak enforcement every time I step onto a job site and hear a worker's story. These databases will provide the necessary transparency to help workers claim their wages, empower agencies to enforce labor laws, and ensure that state resources are directed toward responsible employers. I urge the committee to support this bill and take an important step toward protecting Maryland's workers and strengthening its economy.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Yonis Bonilla
Organizer, Mid Atlantic Pipe Trades Association