



IN SUPPORT OF THE MARYLAND APPRENTICESHIP AND PREVAILING WAGE
TRANSPARENCY ACT (SB3 / HB850)
FAVORABLE

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of the Maryland Apprenticeship and Prevailing Wage Transparency Act. My name is Tom Bello, Executive Vice President of the Mechanical Contractors Association of Metropolitan Washington. Established in 1889, the MCAMW represents 180 construction contractors, some 10,000 workers, and 1,000 working apprentices throughout the District of Columbia, and its Maryland and Virginia suburbs. In addition to our substantial contractor base, we are committed to providing new programs in education, safety, and training for plumbing, heating, ventilation, air conditioning, and refrigeration.

Our economic footprint throughout the region is substantial, generating some \$2 BILLION in annual revenue, and some \$500 MILLION in state, federal and local taxes each and every year.

Our member contractors have decades of firsthand experience managing state and federally funded projects. Today, I'm here to emphasize how this legislation will enhance fairness, transparency, and accountability—benefits that transcend partisan politics and strengthen Maryland's workforce and economy.

In the construction industry, success hinges on skilled labor and fair practices. This legislation is a practical solution to persistent challenges, proposing two public databases: one to track apprentices and another to monitor compliance with prevailing wage standards. These tools will help ensure that public work projects not only meet legal requirements but also promote a stronger, more equitable labor market.

The first database will provide information on certified apprentices, including their trade, certification status, and program sponsor. This transparency is critical. It allows contractors, public agencies, and the public to verify that apprentices are receiving proper training and support. This aligns with what we've seen work effectively in Nevada, where a similar database has improved program accountability and bolstered

workforce development. Importantly, privacy safeguards will ensure that personal details are protected, focusing attention on program outcomes rather than individual records.

The second database will track prevailing wage compliance by collecting data such as job classifications, hours worked, wages, and benefits. Weekly reporting by contractors will create a clear record of adherence to wage standards, while also deterring bad actors. New York's experience with a comparable system demonstrates the value of this approach: since implementing their database, compliance rates on state-funded projects have increased significantly, benefiting workers, taxpayers, and ethical contractors.

What makes this legislation particularly compelling is its non-partisan nature. Fair wages and workforce accountability are universal values. In fact, Nevada's apprenticeship database was supported by a bipartisan coalition, and New York's prevailing wage transparency initiative passed unanimously in both legislative chambers. These outcomes underscore that this isn't about political ideology; it's about ensuring that public dollars support responsible practices and provide real value to our communities.

For Maryland, the benefits of the Maryland Apprenticeship and Prevailing Wage Transparency Act are tangible and far-reaching:

- **Transparency:** By making this data publicly available, we empower citizens and stakeholders to ensure that projects are managed ethically and efficiently.
- **Fairness:** Workers will receive the wages and benefits they are entitled to, leveling the playing field for contractors who follow the rules.
- **Workforce Development:** Highlighting active apprenticeship programs will attract new talent to skilled trades, helping to address labor shortages and support long-term economic growth.
- **Accountability:** Clear reporting and enforcement mechanisms will ensure compliance, protecting public funds and fostering trust in state-funded projects.

In my position at the Mechanical Contractors Association of Metropolitan Washington, I've seen how a lack of transparency can undermine public trust and worker morale. The Maryland Apprenticeship and Prevailing Wage Transparency Act addresses these challenges directly, creating a system that rewards good actors and holds bad actors accountable. It's a practical, proven approach that benefits everyone involved.



In closing, the Maryland Apprenticeship and Prevailing Wage Transparency Act represents a smart, forward-thinking policy that reflects Maryland's commitment to fairness, transparency, and workforce development. This legislation is not about politics; it's about doing what is right for our state, our workers, and our taxpayers.

I urge you to support this bill and issue a favorable report.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Bello", is positioned above the typed name.

Thomas Bello
Executive Vice President
Mechanical Contractors Association of Metropolitan Washington