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## Written Testimony in Support of House Bill 772

### Submitted to the Maryland House Ways and Means Committee February 25, 2025

Chairperson Atterbeary, Vice Chairperson Wilkins, and Members of the Committee,

I am Kate Wolfson, representing Baltimore's Promise, a collective impact organization dedicated to improving career pathways for young people in Baltimore through initiatives like CareerBound, which is on target to put more than 8,300 youth on the path to economic self-sufficiency by 2030. I submit this testimony in strong **support of House Bill 772** and to urge opposition for the **alternative bill proposed by Delegate Wims, HB1245**.

Career counseling is a **critical bridge between education and employment**, helping students make informed decisions about their futures. The current framework ensures that students receive **individualized career guidance**, access to **high-quality apprenticeships**, and exposure to **diverse career opportunities** that align with Maryland's workforce needs. In the past six months of the current school year, Baltimore Career Coaching Initiative has **connected with over 17,000 Baltimore City youth, providing individualized career coaching to youth in grades 6-12 in 115 Baltimore City Public Schools**, helping students to better identify, explore, and plan for their post-secondary career aspirations. **Supporting these provisions, as proposed in HB772, would continue a vital support system for students across the state.**

At Baltimore's Promise, we have seen firsthand how effective career counseling benefits young people:

- **Our first school-to-apprenticeship student** was identified, met all readiness requirements for an adult apprenticeship, and has begun his path to a sustainable career.

- **Paid internships with the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA)** provided students at Edmondson-Westside High School with hands-on experience and direct pathways into transportation careers; youth voice is now contributing to the red line project as a result.
- **CareerBound partners with local employers and the workforce development board** to ensure students receive **mentorship, work-based learning, and access to living-wage jobs** upon graduation.

By supporting the existing career counseling infrastructure, HB772 would continue career counseling for students from **historically underserved communities** who rely on these programs for economic mobility. We urge the General Assembly to support HB772, which extends career counseling provisions and ensures that Maryland continues to invest in its future workforce, and to **oppose the alternative bill, HB1245, which would** eliminate a successful model.

We also encourage **collaboration among workforce boards and school systems statewide** to develop a **coordinated approach** that strengthens career counseling rather than dismantling it. **Baltimore City has been an exemplar for career counseling**, demonstrating the early success that deep collaboration has produced between the Mayor's Office of Employment Development, Baltimore City Public Schools, and Baltimore City Community College.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report on **HB772** and opposition for the alternative legislation (**HB1245**) that would eliminate career counseling funding.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Kate E. Wolfson, Esq.  
Director, CareerBound  
Baltimore's Promise