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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony of Senator Joanne C. Benson

**SB0143: Public Works Contracts – Apprenticeship Requirements
(Maryland Workforce Apprenticeship Utilization Act)**

Good afternoon, Chairman Senator Pamela Beidle, and Vic Chairman Senator Antonio Hays, and the esteemed members of the Finance Committee.

The bill SB0143 strengthens Maryland's workforce development pipeline by ensuring that public dollars invested in public works projects also invested directly in Maryland workers. As we continue to build roads, schools, and infrastructure across our State, we must also build career pathways that allow Marylanders to access skilled, family-supporting jobs in the trades.

SB0143 alters apprenticeship requirements for public works contracts by requiring certain contractors and subcontractors who employ four or more individuals on a covered project to employ the number of qualified apprentices or journey workers necessary to meet an applicable percentage of total labor hours on the project. Beginning January 1, 2027, that applicable percentage is 20 percent, and the Secretary of Labor will annually establish the applicable percentage for subsequent years.

Importantly, this bill shifts the focus from allowing payments in lieu of participation to emphasizing actual utilization of qualified apprentices and journey workers on job sites. This ensures that apprenticeship programs are not merely supported in theory but strengthened in practice through real training opportunities and direct workforce experience.

The bill also enhances transparency and accountability by requiring contractors and subcontractors to provide written verification before commencing work and to submit monthly reports detailing the total number of apprentices and journey workers and the total labor hours worked. The Department of Labor will maintain aggregated data on its website, promoting public transparency and strengthening oversight.

Additionally, SB0143 allows the Secretary to waive the requirements under specific circumstances when contractors can demonstrate that they requested qualified apprentices from all applicable apprenticeship training programs but were unable to secure placements. This ensures fairness while maintaining the integrity of the apprenticeship goals.

This legislation also clarifies that these apprenticeship requirements apply to the University System of Maryland and Baltimore City Community College, ensuring consistency across state-supported public works projects.

By prioritizing workforce participation on publicly funded projects, SB0143 promotes economic mobility, strengthens Maryland's skilled labor force, and ensures that taxpayer investments deliver both infrastructure and opportunity.

Thus, I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB0143 and thank you for your consideration.