

JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 133:

Graduation and Attendance Credit for Vocational Training

TO: Chairman Paul Pinsky, and Members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environment Committee

FROM: Derrell Frazier, Policy Advocate

DATE: February 4, 2020

The Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) is an independent, nonprofit organization that develops and advocates policies and programs to increase the skills, job opportunities, and incomes of low-skill, low-wage workers and job seekers in Maryland. We support Senate Bill 133 as a means of increasing access to occupational and vocational training for high students entering the workforce.

Career and Technology Education programs play a vital role in the early stage development of our young scholars to bridge a pathway to guaranteed employment. Career and technical education (CTE) pairs academic knowledge with technical skills to prepare students for in-demand, high-skilled, and high-waged jobs. CTE programs of study provide the opportunity for students to earn industry-recognized certificates, acquire college credit, and gain work experience. In Maryland, career programs are grouped into career clusters. Career clusters allow students to explore a wide range of career options and to apply academic and technical skills to a specific career area.

JOTF is all too familiar with the benefits of skills training at an early age. For the past 12 years, JOTF has partnered with Associated Builders & Contractors (ABC) to run Project JumpStart, a 14-week, 87-hour pre-apprenticeship construction training program for adult workers in Baltimore City. We also piloted a JumpStart in Prince George's County in 2014 to extend our mission of preparing low-income residents to enter the building trades on a career track that will help them advance beyond entry-level. While our focus, historically, has been adult workers, we have begun to accept younger participants into our program given the challenges with youth unemployment.

Senate Bill 133 seeks to address this challenge by authorizing a county board of education to award credit to a high school student toward a high school diploma or a postsecondary credential, or both, for one vocational course per semester in a certain career and technical education program. It would also authorize a county board to count toward high school attendance the time a high school student spends during certain vocational training in a certain career and technical education program.

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Jobs are the key to economic stability and security, and skills training is a key component to that. For these reasons, we urge a **favorable** vote of Senate Bill 133.