



## Senate Bill 143

*Public Works Contracts - Apprenticeship Requirements*  
*(Maryland Workforce Apprenticeship Utilization Act)*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**  
**WITH AMENDMENTS**

To: Finance and Budget and Taxation  
Committees

Date: February 26, 2026

From: Karrington Anderson & Sarah Sample

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS SB 143 WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill would establish apprenticeship utilization requirements for contractors and subcontractors on covered public works projects. Beginning January 1, 2027, the bill requires that 20% of total labor hours on a covered project be performed by qualified apprentices or journeyworkers. The bill also directs the Maryland Department of Labor to adopt implementing regulations.

Counties recognize the value of registered apprenticeship programs as a proven pathway to workforce development. Encouraging the use of apprentices and journeyworkers on public works projects can strengthen the construction talent pipeline, create career opportunities, and, over time, help stabilize labor costs by cultivating a skilled local workforce.

However, as drafted, SB 143 raises important concerns for local governments as project owners. The bill authorizes the Secretary of Labor, on or before December 31, 2027, and annually thereafter, to set the “applicable percentage” for the following calendar year and to alter that percentage to meet craft-specific supervision ratio requirements. MACo’s primary concern lies with this open-ended authority to adjust the percentage requirement each year. While the bill begins with a 20% standard, future increases, set administratively through regulations rather than legislatively, could materially affect project costs and bidder participation for local governments.

Public works projects are typically awarded to the lowest responsible bidder. If apprenticeship requirements become more stringent or unpredictable over time, the number of bidders and offerors may decline, particularly in smaller or rural jurisdictions where the pool of available apprenticeship program participants may be limited. Reduced competition can drive up costs for county-funded infrastructure, placing additional strain on already tight local budgets.

For these reasons, MACo respectfully requests an amendment to retain the 20% apprenticeship utilization requirement in statute and remove the provision authorizing the Secretary to reset or increase the applicable percentage annually. Maintaining a clear, stable, and legislatively established standard will provide certainty to public bodies while still advancing the bill’s workforce development goals.

With these amendments, SB 143 can strike a better balance between promoting the use of apprenticeship programs and safeguarding affordability and competition in public works contracting.

For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report on SB 143.

### **MACo’s Amendment on SB 143:**

- On page 6, strike beginning with “(B)” in line 5 down through “CRAFT” in line 10.