



Senate Bill 678

*Community Colleges – Vocational Certificates, Apprenticeship Training Programs,
and Associate’s Degrees – Tuition Assistance*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs and
Budget and Taxation Committees

Date: March 1, 2017

From: Natasha Mehu

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 678 as it incentivizes the creation of community college programs that help prepare Maryland students for the workforce and help develop a well-qualified pool of potential employees for local businesses.

SB 678 authorizes counties in partnership with their community colleges to establish Community College Vocational Certificate and Apprenticeship Training Programs. The programs are accompanied by an Associate Degree Tuition Assistance Program. Through these programs, eligible students receive on-the-job training, classroom study, financial assistance, and support services that put them in the best position for employment once their studies are successfully completed. Businesses across the state benefit from students entering the workforce with the specific skills, training, and certifications necessary for employment in their trade or profession.

Counties are invested in having strong and vibrant economies. A robust, well-trained, and educated workforce encourages businesses to locate to and grow in Maryland. This bill helps build relationships between local businesses and community colleges. It properly leaves the decision for establishing a program in the hands of the local government and community college who are best situated to determine whether a program is in their best interest. If a program is established, it requires both the county and the State to split the reimbursement of tuition assistance, disbursing financial burdens and ensuring that the State is equally invested in the advancement of its students and workforce.

Counties support and encourage efforts to incentivize and strengthen apprenticeships and vocational certificate programs that promote a strong and competent workforce. For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 678.