

MD Gov. O'Malley Launches Major Workforce Initiative to Meet Demand for Middle Skills Jobs

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Economic Development

ANNAPOLIS – Governor Martin O'Malley and Lieutenant Governor Anthony Brown today joined with education and community leaders, state and federal officials at Prince George's Community College to launch [Skills2Compete – Maryland](#), a major initiative aimed at increasing the skills and competitiveness of Maryland's workforce. The Governor was joined today by representatives of the National Skills Coalition and the Governor's Workforce Investment Board, Labor, Licensing and Regulation Secretary Alexander M. Sanchez, and other leaders to focus attention and resources on community college certificate and degree programs, apprenticeship opportunities, private career schools and community-based training programs.

"In this economy, we must do everything we can to build the middle-skill and high-skill workforce that is so critical to economic recovery and long-term economic success," said Governor O'Malley. "Economic recovery takes more than just attracting business and creating jobs, it also means equipping those businesses and filling those jobs with a world-class Maryland workforce. Skills2Compete – Maryland will help build that middle and high-skill workforce."

Governor O'Malley also announced Tuesday that Maryland has joined with Complete College America, a national nonprofit organization working to dramatically increase the number of young adults with a college degree or credential, to set degree goals and develop and implement aggressive state and campus-level action plans to meet those goals. Maryland, along with 15 other states, form the Complete College Alliance of states, a select group of leading states committed to significantly increasing the number of students who successfully complete college, closing attainment gaps for traditionally underserved populations.

Skills2Compete – Maryland is an initiative to align the O'Malley-Brown Administration's workforce creation efforts and to focus state agencies, community colleges, local Workforce Investment Boards, apprenticeship programs and other stakeholders on preparing more Marylanders for middle-skill jobs – those that require some training past high school but not necessarily a four-year degree.

"When Governor O'Malley and I took office, we envisioned a Maryland in which all residents had access to greater opportunity. With this new workforce development initiative, we are closer than ever to making this goal a reality," said Lt. Governor Brown. "The Skills2Compete initiative will increase post-secondary success in Maryland and allow us to capitalize on our diverse economy, brainpower and talent pool. We are strengthening our workforce and making the necessary investments to remain a top competitor nationwide. I am honored that Governor O'Malley has asked me to lead this effort and look forward to working with all the participating agencies, the private sector and our neighbors, friends and family members who will develop the necessary skills to compete in our increasingly technological economy."

Governor O'Malley is calling on the workforce development community to increase the skills of Maryland's workforce by 20 percent by 2012. Skills2Compete – Maryland will ensure that every working Marylander has access to the equivalent of at least two years of education or training past high school – leading to a career or technical credential, industry certification, or two years of college – to be pursued at whatever point and pace makes sense for individual workers and industries.

In a new report by the National Skills Coalition titled *Maryland's Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs*, four in ten job openings projected for the State by 2016 are in the middle-skill category, accounting for more than 434,000 openings. In Maryland, these include jobs not only in traditional middle-skill fields such as construction, but also high-paying positions in information technology, healthcare services, and jobs related to the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) effort and the green economy. Among the fastest-growing occupations highlighted in the report are police officers, carpenters and licensed practical nurses.

Many Marylanders lack the necessary basic education, skills and credentials to compete and succeed in these jobs. For example, more than 730,000 Maryland residents do not have a high school diploma or have limited English speaking ability. Despite the State's strong record of providing post-secondary training, many of the State's employers continue to report trouble filling middle-skill positions from the local talent pool.

Skills2Compete – Maryland is founded on the principle that a high school education is no longer adequate for most jobs in today's economy, or to provide the skills needed by businesses to innovate and grow. This is particularly true for thousands of recently laid-off workers who need new skills to compete for the opportunities that exist now and will exist in the future.

Skills2Compete – Maryland supports the Governor's job creation efforts by assuring there are skilled workers at all levels of the labor market to meet job growth expectations, and also supports President Obama's call for all Americans to obtain some form of postsecondary education or job training to prepare for a 21st-century global economy.

Governor O'Malley has designated Lieutenant Governor Anthony Brown to serve as lead for the initiative, and to work with the Governor's Workforce Investment Board (GWIB) as the state Skills2Compete advisory board to ensure system alignment, promote interagency coordination and collaboration and conduct outreach. Among other things, state agencies and other partners involved in the campaign will assist customers in navigating the appropriate resources and services that provide pathways to skills attainment, such as One-Stop Career Centers, community colleges, apprenticeships and private career schools.

"We look forward to developing and implementing this education and training strategy that would allow state residents to be better prepared to meet the demands of Maryland's employers and seek better, more plentiful middle- and high-skill jobs and careers," said William G. "Bill" Robertson, President and CEO of Adventist Healthcare, Inc., and GWIB Chairman.

Skills2Compete is a non-partisan campaign to ensure the U.S. workforce has the skills needed to meet business demand, foster innovation, and grow broadly shared prosperity. The campaign's diverse and growing list of endorsers include national and local leaders from business, labor, education and training, community and civil rights groups, and the public sector. Skills2Compete campaigns have been launched or are being developed in California, Connecticut, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Mississippi, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington and Wisconsin.

For more information about Skills2Compete – Maryland, please visit www.skills.maryland.gov

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