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Maryland Faces Worker Shortage

Tuesday, March 02, 2010
Steve Fermier and Baltimore Sun

Maryland is expected to face shortages of workers to fill jobs that require more than a high school diploma but less than a college degree and that will make up the biggest share of openings in the next six years, according to a national study to be released Tuesday.

The state has a widening gap between workers' credentials and the so-called "middle skills" needed for jobs that will account for 42 percent of all openings through 2016, says the report by the National Skills Coalition, a worker training advocacy group.

Such jobs, which increasingly require more than a high school diploma, include police officers, fire fighters, medical technicians and therapists, electricians, mechanics and nurses.

The coalition has reported similar findings in each of the handful of states it has studied since 2007, when it released a national study that also mirrored the training versus job growth patterns.

Though Maryland is a hub for high skilled jobs in areas such as health care and defense, the biggest share of jobs -- 47 percent -- require middle skills, the report said.

The coalition stops short of making specific recommendations, but it suggests Maryland should offer all residents access to at least two years of education or training beyond high school that will lead to a vocational credential or industry certification. Such training can come through community colleges, private career schools or apprenticeship programs.