

WHEREAS, While welfare reform efforts have helped many former welfare recipients move into the labor force, many of these individuals have found work in entry-level jobs with low wages and without employer provided health care or other benefits; and

WHEREAS, The long-term success of welfare reform and workforce development efforts depends on assisting low-income working parents sustain living wage employment and access career ladders for employment promotion; and

WHEREAS, Helping low-income working parents access career ladders for employment promotion to better jobs with higher wages and employer provided benefits can result in long-term improvements in the economic well-being of low-income families thereby reducing the likelihood of future public assistance needs; and

WHEREAS, The increased job related skills of parents can also serve to encourage their children to perform better in school, thereby helping to break the cycle of poverty; and

WHEREAS, Numerous employers in Maryland are currently suffering shortages of skilled workers which inhibits the economic growth of the State and the increased skills-based training of individuals will contribute to both economic development and prosperity in the State; now, therefore,

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article 41 - Governor - Executive and Administrative Departments

**SUBTITLE 4. SKILLS-BASED TRAINING FOR EMPLOYMENT PROMOTION
(STEP) PILOT PROGRAM.**

18-401.

IT IS THE INTENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY THAT THE SKILLS-BASED TRAINING FOR EMPLOYMENT PROMOTION (STEP) PILOT PROGRAM:

(1) ENABLE LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN TO PURSUE EDUCATION AND TRAINING DIRECTED AT ATTAINMENT OF IDENTIFIED SKILLS AND CREDENTIALS;

(2) ASSIST LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN IN MOVING TOWARD LONG-TERM SELF-SUFFICIENCY WITH SKILLS-BASED TRAINING THAT WILL:

(I) LEAD TO JOBS WITH FAMILY SUSTAINING WAGES INCLUDING HEALTH CARE AND OTHER BENEFITS;

(II) PROVIDE ACCESS TO PROFESSIONAL CAREER LADDERS FOR CONTINUED JOB ADVANCEMENT; AND

(III) ELIMINATE FUTURE NEEDS FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE;