

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

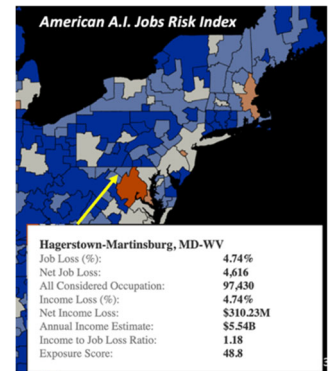
The Washington County Workforce Imperative “Preparing Tomorrow’s Workforce”

The Challenge: A Structural Talent Deficit

National research is predicting that 75% of future jobs will require post-secondary credentials. Washington County is currently facing a **20-percentage point postsecondary attainment gap** compared to the in-state economic competitors to our east (Frederick, Howard, Montgomery counties, etc.). While our population is growing faster than the state average, our workforce is structurally behind. With a median family income of \$74,000 against a required living wage of **\$100,000 for a family of four (\$85,000 for a family of three)**, the current trajectory is unsustainable for long-term community stability. **Our workforce needs more postsecondary education and training to secure the credentials that lead to living wage jobs.**

The Threat: The AI "Wired Belt" Risk

New data from the **March 2026 Tufts University AI Jobs Risk Index** reveals that Maryland is the most vulnerable state in the U.S. after D.C. Approximately **40% of our workforce is at high risk of automation**, with white-collar roles in finance, tech, and professional services facing the steepest displacement. **The Hagerstown/Martinsburg region is projected to lose over 4600 jobs to AI over the next 2 to 5 years resulting in \$310M net loss of income.** This is no longer just a "manual labor" issue; it is a direct threat to our regional tax base and consumer spending power.



The Opportunity: The 60/80 Vision

To remain competitive, we must jump-start a community-wide education movement. **Our goal is to move degree attainment from 34% to 60% and increase the number of workers with high-value trade certifications** (projected at 15–25%). Combined, this will ensure over 80% of our citizens hold the postsecondary credentials required for "good jobs" paying living wages by 2040 and make Washington County economically competitive.

The Bottom Line

Education is our single most important workforce metric. Washington County currently has 8% of our population (600 young adults) ages 18 to 24 are not in school and do not hold a job. Each disconnected youth costs the community approximately \$14,000 per year. By better aligning K-12 readiness with industry-recognized credentials, we transform a \$9M annual "disconnection cost" into a sustainable pipeline of local talent.

What Companies Can Do:

- Use your networks to share this information and the basic need for postsecondary credentials
- Launch/expand paid internships & apprenticeships
- Help Fund tuition reimbursement, certifications, and dual enrollment
- Partner with WCPS and postsecondary education systems to align hiring with local credential pathways
- Provide mentors, speakers, job shadowing, and career exposure
- Be active in recruiting and hiring disconnected youth
- Partner with GHC and other stakeholder groups to scale solutions

For More Information go to www.GreaterHagerstown.org

Studies cited: [Lumina Foundation Goal 2040](#) and [Tufts Univ. American AI Job Risk Index](#)