

January 10, 2020

Annette Porter
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Chair Anne Kaiser and Members of
The House Ways and Means Committee
131 House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB565

Dear Honorable Chair and Distinguished Members of the House Ways and Means Committee,

I am writing in my capacity as the Director of the Saul Zaentz Innovation Fund and Co-Director of the MICA JHU Film Centre to voice my strong opposition to HB565, which proposes to eliminate the film tax credit program in FY2023.

At the Innovation Fund, every year we award approximately \$500,000 to emerging filmmakers in Baltimore and we spend roughly the same amount of money each year on training and development. The JHU MICA Film Centre houses two Graduate and two Undergraduate Film Programs and between us, we are preparing and supporting dozens of young people each year for roles in the film industry.

We see, first-hand what supporting the filmmaking community can do for our community. Baltimore is developing a reputation as one of the most exciting, burgeoning independent filmmaking communities in the US. We have a deep bench of talent, a wide range of attractive locations for filmmaking and some of the most exciting and promising voices in the American filmmaking world right now.

The tax credit program is critical to building upon this base. It helps attract large film productions to our state, creating jobs for our filmmakers and ancillary businesses. The incentive for low budget films is key to retaining our independent creative talent. As an example, one of our Innovation Fund Fellows was recently able to make use of the tax credit in what promises to be a very successful film. We granted the filmmaker an initial \$75,000 to help make the film, all of which was spent in Maryland. This single, small-budget production employed 25 local people – ranging from the camera and art department, to sound department and local producers, to catering and costume. In addition to our grant, the production qualified for \$32,500 from the tax credit program. According to the filmmaker, this amount – and the

knowledge that this amount was going to be available once their spending was audited - allowed them not only to finish the film but to pay the local crew fair wages throughout the production.

I believe that passing HB565 would derail the momentum we have been building and send a strong signal that Maryland has become film unfriendly. We have great talent and we are growing more talent, but if the state puts a sunset clause on the film tax credit, our efforts will be like pouring water into a bucket with holes in its bottom. Large productions will look elsewhere to film, talented filmmakers will relocate and Georgia will once again be the beneficiary of our demise.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Annette Porter