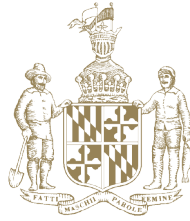


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Appropriations Committee



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HB 1455: Economic Development – Makerspace Initiative Pilot Program

February 28, 2020

Madam Chair, Members of the Committee

I am here to present to you House Bill 1455 – an initiative that invests in Makerspaces in Maryland. So, let's start with the simple question: What is a makerspace? It is a space that allows individuals to creatively use their talents and execute on ideas. It is a place for individuals to start a business. It is a place for communities to come together and learn a new skill. These spaces are not cookie-cutter. They must be reflective of the areas they serve, as I'll explain in a moment.

We are fortunate to have in Maryland what many consider to be the gold standard for makerspaces – a facility off of Greenmount Avenue in Baltimore City called OpenWorks. In the audience today is Mr. Will Holman, the executive director of OpenWorks. So, why is a delegate from Western Maryland presenting this bill?

Because our delegation is proud to support a second makerspace that has opened in Allegany County called Western Maryland Works. Just like OpenWorks, the facility in Allegany County allows individuals to come, create and share their ideas. It is a partnership between Allegany County Government and Allegany College of Maryland. While Western Maryland Works also has the 3D printers, CNC machines, and many of the other equipment that OpenWorks has, its focus is also on workforce training.

This is important to note because of the recent closure of the Luke (Verso) Papermill. In April 2019, our community was rocked by the news of the closure of the Luke (Verso) Papermill. This 130 year institution was the source of 600+ direct jobs in our community and approximately 3,000 indirect jobs. The employees looking for a new skill needed trained and they needed trained quickly. Thanks to the makerspace and the partnership with Allegany College of Maryland, over 60 former employees are now getting trained in in-demand occupation.

This bill will provide funding through TEDCO to OpenWorks, Western Maryland Works and other facilities throughout the state. What we are seeing through the partnership of these two organizations is that makerspaces work in Western Maryland and in Baltimore. In the urban areas of the state and the rural. Putting people to work. Giving them hope is bipartisan and should be celebrated throughout the state.

Delegate Mike McKay

Serving Allegany and Washington Counties