



**TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE
WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE**

**SENATE BILL – 453
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT –
MARYLAND MAKERSPACE INITIATIVE PROGRAM**

POSITION: SUPPORT

MARCH 30, 2022

The Maryland Technology Development Corporation (TEDCO) is dedicated to economic growth through the fostering of an inclusive entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystem. TEDCO discovers, invests in, and helps build great Maryland-based, technology companies.

TEDCO supports Senate Bill 453 – Economic Development – Maryland Makerspace Initiative Program and thanks the bill sponsors, Senators McCray and Edwards, for their leadership on this important issue. Senate Bill 453 establishes a new program and fund in TEDCO to provide financial assistance and technical assistance in support of establishing, expanding, and operating makerspaces in the State of Maryland. The bill allows TEDCO to partner with the Open Works Center for Advanced Fabrication Technologies (“Open Works”) in Baltimore City to provide the technical assistance to participating makerspaces.

TEDCO recognizes the importance of makerspaces as a valuable component of the of the infrastructure for an innovation-based ecosystem and economy. They serve the ecosystem in several important ways that include:

- Providing tools, equipment, and expertise for prototyping and advancing product ideas for small businesses and entrepreneurs;
- Training workforce on software and equipment used in product design, prototyping, and manufacturing;
- Providing technical education to adults and youth;
- Fostering the creation of small businesses, which use the makerspace facilities for small scale manufacturing and product development; and
- Serving to inspire creativity and ingenuity in those who will be the next generation of entrepreneurs and business leaders in our State.

Open Works, a makerspace located in Baltimore City and a national leader in the maker movement, is an example of the impact that a makerspace can have in a region. Since its

opening in 2016, 194 small businesses have utilized the Open Works facility to create \$8 million in local and \$9.9 million in statewide annual economic impact according to an economic impact study conducted by Coppin State University's Center for Strategic Entrepreneurship ("Study"). Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, member businesses employed 85 people in addition to the 33 jobs created by Open Works itself. Open Works has enrolled 4,194 adults and 411 K-12 youth in maker education programs; moreover, the Open Works user community is diverse - 44% Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), 42% female, and 8% non-binary. According to the Study, Open Works created 252 direct and indirect jobs in Baltimore City and across the state. For every dollar spent on Open Works' operations, they contributed \$6.60 back into the State economy.

Senate Bill 453 will help create a network of makerspaces across the State leveraging the best practices developed at Open Works. This represents an opportunity to strengthen Maryland's innovation infrastructure and expand the economic impact that makerspaces, like Open Works, are already having on our economy. An investment in makerspaces will be an investment in Maryland's economy through the creation of more companies, the development of more entrepreneurs, and a faster road to market for new products launched by Maryland's early-stage companies.

For all of these reasons, **TEDCO is supportive of SB 453 and requests a favorable report.**