



February 20, 2023

Dear Committee Chair Griffith and Honorable Members of the Finance Committee:

My name is Sig Libowitz and I am the Director of the Johns Hopkins Graduate School of Film and Media. While I do not speak for or on behalf of Johns Hopkins, I can speak on behalf of my students and the thousands of Film and Media students and graduates of Johns Hopkins and Towson, Morgan State and MICA, Stevenson, UMBC and the University of Maryland for whom this bill would be incredibly meaningful and would open up a host of job and internship possibilities that would allow these students (Marylanders and the children of Marylanders) the opportunity to NOT have to leave our state to find work BUT INSTEAD to continue living and working and paying taxes here in Maryland. I also speak for myself as an independent, Academy Award shortlisted producer and screenwriter, as well as an entertainment attorney, former Studio Executive (in Hollywood and NYC), and, most importantly, as a Maryland native, born & raised, a proud graduate of Baltimore Polytechnic who has returned to teach and work in the Maryland film and television industry. **I write to you today in strong and vocal support for Senate Bill 452.**

Honorable Members of the Committee – you have a fantastic opportunity before you. During just one television show made in Maryland (Netflix's *House of Cards*), the production hired on average more than 2,000 Maryland residents per season for six seasons. The production purchased or rented goods and services from more than 2,000 Maryland businesses per season and provided an economic impact of nearly \$120 million per season. This is just one show! More recently, the Paramount+ television show *Lioness* filmed across nine Maryland counties and, as just one example of their positive economic impact, bought out all the propane tanks from one Cumberland County location in a few days. Maryland businesses – office rentals, hotels, caterers and restaurants, laundromats, hardware stores and car rental facilities to name a few - benefit mightily from the economic waterfall that flows from film and television production. What could we do with many more productions and more jobs created in our state? I ask because we have - quite literally - turned away dozens and dozens of major tv and movie projects from our state and our workers and families because we have no further incentive packages to offer. Real, high-paying jobs for our students and graduates to stay and work and continue to build their crafts and livelihoods in Maryland are slipping through our fingers every month.

We know that HBO, Netflix, Amazon, Paramount+ and other studios and streamers want to shoot here in Maryland because they know from experience how good our crew base is, that the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest casting / talent base is located here in the Maryland/Capitol region, that we're a short train ride from NYC, a ready, nearby, more cost-effective and dependable alternative to Washington, DC, and we offer a wide array of locations from mountains to seashores, quaint towns and rural counties to Baltimore's hustle and Annapolis' history and architecture.

**I ask you to please imagine a future where we don't have to say no to economic development, where we don't have to say no to jobs, where we don't have to say no to business expansion and creative opportunities. Our universities, our students, our graduates, our local crews and all of their families ask you to not only imagine that future but make it a reality.**

From my personal experience as an independent filmmaker, I love working in Maryland and bringing business and opportunities to our state. I wrote and produced a short film, entirely shot in Maryland and hiring more than 90% Maryland residents that was shortlisted for an Academy Award and was invited to screen for the Pentagon, Congress, West Point and the French Embassy among others. I'm currently producing a web-series in Howard County that is 100% crewed by Marylanders (including many students from Hopkins, Towson and the Baltimore School for the Arts). I have tried to make other projects (feature films and television shows) here in Maryland, but could not because there were no tax credits available and I could not get a bank or distributors to finance these projects without a state tax incentive package attached. I was forced to film in other states ... even though the stories and characters were originally set for Maryland.

Maryland has a history of producing dynamic, singular and successful films and television shows here in our beautiful state: from *Diner* to *Hairspray*, from *Runaway Bride* to *Wedding Crashers*, from *Homicide* to *VEEP*, and more recently to *We Own the City* and *Lioness*. We have a strong, well-known and recognized tradition of strong local directors and storytellers – from Barry Levinson to John Waters to Michael Flanagan and Eduardo Sanchez. An expanded Film and Television Tax Incentive Program, along with its 10% set aside to promote and inspire Maryland local small films and filmmakers, will go a long way to helping our students (undergraduate and graduate) find jobs in their fields right here in our state, work and raise families here, and support future generations of amazing Maryland stories and storytellers.

Thank you for your time and thank you in advance for your support of SB452.

Best regards,



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