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Dear Senators,

I am submitting favorable testimony SB0085, Corporations and Associations - Limited Worker Cooperative Associations - Authorization (Maryland Limited Cooperative Association Act). As a founding member of Baltimore Bicycle Works, a worker cooperative bicycle shop in Baltimore founded in 2008, I am passionate about the positive impact worker owned businesses can have on our communities. Organizing with my co-founders and co-owners has been the greatest privilege.

It allowed for us to start a thriving and business that employs people at a living wage and provides value to our community on a very modest budget. It also allows the organization to live on and thrive after founders have moved on to other work projects. Our now 2 shops have sold and services thousands of bicycles, getting people in our community engaged in a healthy and ecologically beneficial activity.

Our current means of incorporating in Maryland are limited and disproportionately impacted our negatively. I often felt like despite the hard work we were doing to lift up our co-owners and our customers, we were being punished for not being owned by a single person or entity. A cooperative association is critical to ensuring these organization are on equal footing and have the same opportunity to thrive as other businesses.

Thanks,

Meredith A. Mitchell