



February 6, 2024

The Latino Economic Development Center  
Baltimore, Maryland 21224

**TESTIMONY ON SB# 0085 - POSITION: FAVORABLE**

**Corporations and Associations – Limited Worker Cooperative Associations –  
Authorization (Maryland Limited Cooperative Association Act)**

**TO:** Chair Sen. William C. Smith, Jr., Vice Chair Sen. Jeff Waldstreicher and members of the  
Judicial Proceedings Committee

**FROM:** The Latino Economic Development Center

**The Latino Economic Development Center (LEDC) is submitting this testimony in support  
of SB# 0085, Maryland Limited Cooperative Association Act.**

For 33 years, LEDC has delivered culturally and linguistically competent, comprehensive community and economic development services. Our mission is to drive the economic and social advancement of low- to moderate-income Latinos and other underserved communities in DC, MD, VA, and PR by equipping them with the skills and tools to achieve financial independence and become leaders in their communities.

In 2017, LEDC acquired Empowered Women International (EWI), which aims to provide entrepreneurship training, mentoring, market access, and support services to help talented and high-potential women monetize their creative or cultural assets, artistic abilities, knowledge, and skills. EWI offers dynamic training programs with professional teachers, mentors, and a supportive peer community where women can achieve their entrepreneurial dreams. Each year, EWI serves over 450 women such as in Entrepreneur Pathways for Women, which integrates training, mentoring, and support services. Dedicated mentors provide ongoing support as women apply new skills to their emerging businesses. EWI and LEDC collaborate with a broad network of social and business services to meet individual needs and provide expanded opportunities. Our testimony today will focus on the value that worker cooperatives provide to low-to-moderate income Latinos and other underserved communities.

Worker cooperatives are value-driven businesses that put the worker and community benefits as the core of their purpose (Rural Maryland Council); EWI and LEDC identify with their power to support and create jobs. In 2022, LEDC partnered with the Baltimore Roundtable for

DC: 1401 Columbia Road NW, Unit C-1 Washington, DC 20009 | (202) 540-7400

MD: 2520 Prosperity Drive, Suite 200 Silver Spring, MD 20904 | (202) 540-7400

3500 Boston Street, Suite 431, Baltimore MD 21224 | (202) 540-7400

10 E. North Ave., Baltimore, MD 21202 | (202) 540-7400

VA: 2300 Wilson Blvd. Suite 719, Arlington VA 22201 | (202) 540-7400

PR: Calle Ramón Emeterio Betances #345, Suite 108, Mayagüez, PR 00680 | (939) 545-281

[www.ledcmetro.org](http://www.ledcmetro.org) | [@ledcmetro](https://twitter.com/ledcmetro)



Economic Democracy (BRED) to educate EWI Entrepreneur Training for Success (ETS) program participants about the importance of cooperative agreements. In 2023, this resulted in the launch of a webinar called Co-Op 101 specifically dedicated to educating small business owners how to develop and tailor Cooperative Worker agreements to their community's needs. Finally, the EWI Women Coop Grant Program was established in partnership with BRED after 3 businesses plans were created and 1 participant incorporated as a co-op after successful completion of the webinar. Furthermore, worker cooperatives create more opportunities for individuals to build wealth in communities most directly affected by inequality, helping vulnerable workers develop new skills and earning potential, household income and assets. Recognition of worker cooperative associations will allow EWI to better support the needs of their clients.

The Latino Economic Development Center and Empowered Women International ask the Judicial Proceedings Committee to vote favorably in support of SB# 0085, Maryland Limited Cooperative Association Act. Thank you to Chair Sen. William C. Smith, Jr. for your support and for the opportunity to testify before the Committee.

DC: 1401 Columbia Road NW, Unit C-1 Washington, DC 20009 | (202) 540-7400

MD: 2520 Prosperity Drive, Suite 200 Silver Spring, MD 20904 | (202) 540-7400

3500 Boston Street, Suite 431, Baltimore MD 21224 | (202) 540-7400

10 E. North Ave., Baltimore, MD 21202 | (202) 540-7400

VA: 2300 Wilson Blvd. Suite 719, Arlington VA 22201 | (202) 540-7400

PR: Calle Ramón Emeterio Betances #345, Suite 108, Mayagüez, PR 00680 | (939) 545-281

[www.ledcmetro.org](http://www.ledcmetro.org) | [@ledcmetro](https://twitter.com/ledcmetro)

