

MD Coop Bill SB0085 Testimony 6 Feb. 2024

My name is Kimberly. I support this bill. I am 100% in favor of any bill that will make it easier for Worker Cooperatives to exist in Maryland. My work in Cooperatives has allowed me to learn and experience an equitable, secure, positive job environment that encourages productivity and participation.

Because education, training, and information are part of the nationally recognized principles of a cooperative structure, I have been able to gain skills and try new things without the fear of losing my job, or being let go because I didn't "know".

Another core principle of Cooperatives is concern for community. This has been my experience where every coop I have worked with has consciously helped support and boost other businesses in their community. This is a win for the health of a neighborhood, especially those struggling economically.

Nationally recognized core Cooperative values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity give coops an advantage in promoting a diverse economy. Coops can hire Folks like myself who may have been overlooked by other employers. When I was re-entering the workforce after raising my children, I was older and felt my experience wouldn't be appreciated. In the Cooperative setting, I was able to retrain, and brush up on my skills while earning a wage and participating fully in the daily decisions required for running a business. Once becoming a Worker Owner, I have been able to gain the knowledge it takes to run our business through the training and teamwork involved in a Worker Cooperative.

Overall, the benefits of Worker Cooperatives in Maryland communities make them essential. Please support SB0085 so more of these essential businesses can be created and thrive under the already built-in and self-sustaining Cooperative principles.

Thank you for listening.

Sincerely,
Kimberly Lodge
Maryland Resident