

Honorable Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

I am submitting this favorable testimony for SB0085 with a sense of joy and eagerness. My name is Evan Burton, and I have been a proponent and ally of the worker co-op movement for the better part of a decade. Though I was born and raised in Maryland, I've lived in other states, and I've seen firsthand how legislation favorable to co-ops promotes their creation, leading to rich, community-based economic ecosystems and broader access to secure livelihoods and workplaces based on respect and economic justice.

And here in Maryland, the worker co-ops that do exist provide meaningful employment and often serve as vital hubs that strengthen the bonds of members of the community. The results I've witnessed are more generative communities, more creative communities and closer-knit communities with a collective commitment to making life better for all their members.

I live in Baltimore, and my personal ambition is to start a worker co-op focused around media production and distribution so that people can literally own their own stories while generating shared wealth that stays in their community. I believe the time is now to make it easier for people to create worker cooperatives in Maryland, and for worker cooperatives to manage their business. I also believe the power of the access and opportunity that worker cooperatives provide to everyday people cannot be overstated, and I enthusiastically endorse SB0085 for the good it can do for workers in Maryland and the communities they belong to.

Thank you,
Evan Burton