

February 6, 2024

Dear Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

My name is Daniel Levine, and I am a constituent of Sen. Washington's in District 43A. I am submitting favorable testimony on SB0085, the Maryland Limited Cooperative Association Act.

I have also been a member of Baltimore Bicycle Works, one of Baltimore's oldest worker cooperatives, since May of 2022. I joined BBW both because I love bikes and because I've been fascinated by worker cooperatives for years. I was looking for an alternative structure even to the mission-driven non-profit and educational institutions I've worked in, that often have noble goals for the organization, but can be just as hierarchical and toxic places to work as anywhere else. Perhaps especially since I have often worked for organizations that are focused on helping people, I have often felt frustrated and powerless in the face of decisions being made on behalf of my organization that I thought were harmful to people we were supposed to help, and that I had little ability to change.

Most of us spend a huge proportion of our waking hours at work, and most of us are subject to hierarchical structures at work. Worker cooperatives give workers more genuine voice and control over their conditions. Besides their value directly to the workers, worker co-ops tend to create more stable, better-paying jobs than similar non-cooperatively-organized businesses. Co-ops help to keep wealth in our communities - since workers are also the owners and recipients of the business' profits - and they can lower the capital barriers to starting a business.

Thank you for your consideration, and I hope that you will support SB0085, making it easier for worker cooperatives to operate in Maryland.

Sincerely,

Daniel H. Levine