

**February 18, 2025**

The Honorable Vanessa E. Atterbeary  
Chair, House Ways and Means Committee  
Maryland General Assembly  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Support for House Bill 648 – Economic Development – Business Resource Initiative for Developmental Growth and Empowerment (BRIDGE) Program – Establishment**

**Dear Chair Atterbeary and Esteemed Committee Members,**

At Maryland Latinos Unidos (MLU), we recognize that small businesses are the backbone of our communities. For Maryland's Latino entrepreneurs, however, access to the capital, resources, and mentorship necessary to build and sustain successful businesses remains a significant challenge. House Bill 648, which establishes the Business Resource Initiative for Developmental Growth and Empowerment (BRIDGE) Program, represents an important opportunity to provide targeted support for socially and economically disadvantaged business owners, ensuring they have a fair chance to grow, thrive, and contribute to Maryland's economy.

Latino-owned businesses are among the fastest-growing in the state, yet they continue to face disproportionate barriers to funding and technical assistance. Many operate without the financial safety nets or institutional connections available to other businesses, leaving them more vulnerable to economic downturns and limiting their ability to scale. HB 648 will help bridge this gap by providing financial support for business incubators designed to serve entrepreneurs who have historically been excluded from traditional pathways to success. By investing in these incubators, Maryland is not only leveling the playing field but actively fostering a more diverse and resilient economy.

For the Latino business community, the impact of this legislation will be profound. Access to business incubators that offer tailored mentorship, networking opportunities, and financial literacy training can mean the difference between struggling to stay afloat and achieving sustainable success. By eliminating systemic obstacles and providing targeted resources, HB 648 strengthens the foundation upon which Latino entrepreneurs can build generational wealth, create jobs, and contribute to the economic well-being of the entire state.

MLU is committed to ensuring that the benefits of this legislation reach the communities that need them most. Through outreach, education, and advocacy, we will work to connect Latino business owners with the opportunities made available through the BRIDGE Program. Our organization will help entrepreneurs navigate the application process, raise awareness about available funding, and collaborate with incubators to ensure culturally competent support. The success of HB 648 will be measured not only by the businesses it helps launch but by the long-term economic stability it fosters within our communities.

We urge the House Ways and Means Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 648. At a time when economic opportunity must be made accessible to all, this legislation provides the necessary tools to uplift Latino entrepreneurs and create a stronger, more inclusive economy for Maryland.

**Sincerely,**

Carlos Orbe, Jr.  
Communications and Public Affairs Specialist  
Maryland Latinos Unidos  
[corbejr@mdlatinosunidos.org](mailto:corbejr@mdlatinosunidos.org)