

**House Bill 1554****Date:** March 12, 2025**Committee:** House Ways and Means Committee**Position:** Opposed

Dear Chairwoman Atterbeary and Members of the Committee,

My name is Delia Burl, and I am the founder of Tidewater Studio, a brand strategy and design studio based right here in Annapolis. I am here today to oppose House Bill 1554/Senate Bill 1045.

You say you want to support local business. I've been building my business for the past 5 years, finally leaving my corporate job six months ago. I've been able to connect with dozens of small businesses, all of whom share their stories with me. Not just the *how*, but the *why*.

I've spoken with the woman who is branching out on her own for the first time, finally ready to turn her dream into reality after putting her career goals aside to raise her family.

I've spoken with the woman who went through a painful divorce turn fear into resiliency — starting her own consulting business to guide women into financial independence in their times of need.

You may spend today hearing a 2-minute testimony from a plethora of businesses. I spend every day with them. Hearing their stories, their passion, and the undeniable fire that is driving them to build a business that's not just transactional, but transformational.

The industries targeted are ones that have seen growth in recent years. So, why then, is the answer to place a barrier in front of those very businesses? We are the ones who have fought to keep going, to innovate, to adapt, and to provide services that better our communities each day. Now, in the name of nationwide budget uncertainty, this bill threatens to take away the momentum your local businesses have worked so hard to build.

Why create a monetary gate that makes it that much harder for small businesses like mine to continue operating, let alone grow? It *is not, and should not* be our responsibility to shoulder the weight of a deficit that must be tackled through more sustainable, balanced solutions.

If your ultimate goal is truly to build a thriving, resilient Maryland, then why are we imposing this kind of tax on the industries that are directly fueling it?

This bill isn't about the money, it's about the people. The very women and men who have been essential to our local economy, that have served each and every one of you, with your response only further harming your own people.

Thank you for your time and consideration on my opposition to this bill.

Sincerely,

Delia Burl

Founder & Brand Consultant

Tidewater Studio