

January 10, 2020

Annette Porter
Director, Saul Zaentz Innovation Fund
Co-Director JHU MICA Film Centre
10 E. North Ave, 2nd Floor
Baltimore, MD 21202
aporte21@jhu.edu

Chair Guy Guzzone and Members of
The Budget and Taxation Committee
Miller Senate Office Building
3 West Wing
11 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SB718-SUPPORT

Dear Honorable Chair and Distinguished Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee,

I am writing in my capacity as the Director of the Saul Zaentz Innovation Fund and Co-Director of the MICA JHU Film Centre to voice my strong support for SB718, which proposes to increase the film tax credit program to \$20 million a year.

At the Innovation Fund, every year we award approximately \$500,000 to emerging filmmakers in Baltimore and we spend roughly the same amount of money each year on training and development. The JHU MICA Film Centre houses two Graduate and two Undergraduate Film Programs and between us, we are preparing and supporting dozens of young people each year for roles in the film industry.

We see, first-hand what supporting the filmmaking community can do for our community. Baltimore is developing a reputation as one of the most exciting, burgeoning independent filmmaking communities in the US. We have a deep bench of talent, a wide range of attractive locations for filmmaking and some of the most exciting and promising voices in the American filmmaking world right now.

The tax credit program is critical to building upon this base. It helps attract large film productions to our state, creating jobs for our filmmakers and ancillary businesses. The incentive for low budget films is key to retaining our independent creative talent. As an example, one of our Innovation Fund Fellows was recently able to make use of the tax credit in what promises to be a very successful film. We granted the filmmaker an initial \$75,000 to help make the film, all of which was spent in Maryland. This single, small-budget production employed 25 local people – ranging from the camera and art department, to sound department and local producers, to catering and costume. In addition to our grant, the production qualified for \$32,500 from the tax credit program. According to the filmmaker, this amount – and the

knowledge that this amount was going to be available once their spending was audited - allowed them not only to finish the film but to pay the local crew fair wages throughout the production.

By expanding our tax credit, we will be able to attract more than one big production to Baltimore at a time to diversify and expand the long-term health of our industry. As can be clearly seen by states like Georgia, who expanded their film tax program as we throttled ours, film productions move to states with film tax credits, and when they move, they bring jobs and revenue with them.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Annette Porter