

**Bill No.: SB 826**

**Title: Economic Development – Makerspace Initiative Pilot Program**

**Sponsor: Senator Cory McCray**

**Committee: Finance**

**March 2, 2020**

Open Works began seven years ago with the acquisition of a 34,000 S.F. vacant warehouse in east Baltimore. Over the next 3 years of development, the design and construction of our facility generated 85 jobs and \$15.6M of economic impact in Maryland. In September of 2016, we opened our doors to the public with a mission to make tools, technology, and the knowledge to use them accessible.

We fulfill that mission by providing membership access to industrial tools; training in how to use them for both young people and adults; and studio space for small businesses, entrepreneurs, and startups to launch their enterprises. Three and half years in, we have built a thriving community of makers that spans from age 8 to 88. We see over 1,000 people pass through our facility each month for classes, events, and membership use. These people are incredibly diverse – majority female, 43% people of color, and coming from over 200 unique zip codes. All of this activity delivers 118 jobs and \$9.5M of economic impact to the state of Maryland each year, as well as \$700,000 in tax revenues for local and state governments. No one else in the United States is successfully running a makerspace at this scale and level of impact.

The makerspace movement is still a young and rapidly developing field, lacking diversity of participation, documented best practices, and techniques for economic impact. Open Works has developed a valuable set of operational competencies that can help other municipalities in Maryland derive similar economic and educational benefits from makerspaces.

The proposed legislation creates a non-lapsing fund to be administered by TEDCO that would support the dissemination of Open Works' best practices to other makerspaces and municipalities establishing makerspaces in the State of Maryland. This will help other new organizations increase their ability to deliver high-quality services to communities in need, quickly scale their audience, and produce sustainable, grassroots economic growth. Further, this bill will help ensure the financial viability of public-facing makerspaces in Maryland by providing operational support that can be leveraged for greater growth, productivity, and private fundraising. This is an opportunity for Maryland to be a national leader in equitable economic development, STEM education, and 21<sup>st</sup> century manufacturing.

On behalf of Open Works' staff, board of directors, and user community, I encourage this committee to produce a favorable report on SB 826.