



ALLEGANY COUNTY, MARYLAND

The Board of County Commissioners

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February 25, 2020

The Honorable Anne R. Kaiser, Chair
House Ways and Means Committee
House Office Building, Room 131
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chairwoman Kaiser:

I am writing on behalf of the Board of County Commissioners of Allegany County to voice our support for **HB 1455: Economic Development – Makerspace Initiative Pilot Program**. As you know, Allegany County Government recently made strides in developing a makerspace we call Western Maryland Works. This makerspace has already dramatically impacted our community. In April 2019, our community was rocked by the news of the closure of the Luke (Verso) Papermill. This 130-year institution was the source of 600+ direct jobs in our community and approximately 3,000 indirect jobs. The employees that were now looking for a new skill needed trained and they needed trained quickly. Thanks to the makerspace and the partnership we have with Allegany College of Maryland, over 60 former employees are now getting trained in in-demand occupation. The makerspace is also the future home of our county's robotics team and will serve as an incubator for small business growth.

This legislation will help us grow our makerspace and will also seed this new and innovative initiative throughout Maryland. To that end, Allegany County Government is thrilled to be partnering with OpenWorks of Baltimore to share ideas, training opportunities, and standard operating procedures. Again, this legislation will make Maryland a leader in this maker movement. In short, we are respectfully requesting the Committee's **FAVORABLE** consideration of the bill. I will also be on hand to testify on this measure and look forward to addressing the Committee's questions in regard to the same.

Sincerely,

Jacob C. Shade, President
Allegany County Board of County Commissioners