



TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL 1455 -- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - MAKERSPACE INITIATIVE PILOT PROGRAM

February 28, 2020

**DONALD C. FRY
PRESIDENT & CEO
GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE**

Position: Support

House Bill 1455 establishes the Makerspace Initiative Pilot Program in the Maryland Technology Development Corporation (TEDCO). The pilot program would award financial assistance for the establishment or expansion of makerspaces for fiscal years 2022, 2023, and 2024. The bill requires the Governor to appropriate at least \$300,000 annually for the Makerspace Initiative Pilot Program.

A makerspace is a collaborative work space for making, learning, exploring, and sharing that uses high tech to no tech tools. Makerspaces provide a tangible economic development and workforce training benefits because they provide students with access to experts in a variety of fields meant to nurture an entrepreneurial spirit that is so important in a modern economy. Providing students with new opportunities to learn and innovate through 21st century skills and training, including the use of real world applications for classroom concepts, is paramount. Makerspaces accomplish this by providing young people with future employment opportunities to either create new companies or find employment in a multitude of creative workplaces.

This bill is consistent with a key tenet in *Gaining the Competitive Edge: Keys to Economic Growth and Job Creation in Maryland*, a report published by the GBC that identifies eight core pillars for a competitive business environment and job growth:

Strategic and effective investments in business growth. The State must commit to substantive strategic investments, leveraged with capital assets, to nurture business and job growth. Investments should include competitive and effective tax credits, business development incentives, and tactical initiatives to nurture private investments in industry growth.

Additionally, the GBC's *2020 Legislative Priorities* states that an important priority is to "support a strong economic development infrastructure that improves the business climate, creates, jobs, and cultivates entrepreneurship" House Bill 1455 is consistent with this priority.

For these reasons, the Greater Baltimore Committee urges a favorable report on House Bill 1455.

The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) is a non-partisan, independent, regional business advocacy organization comprised of hundreds of businesses -- large, medium and small -- educational institutions, nonprofit organizations and foundations located in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard counties as well as Baltimore City. The GBC is a 64-year-old, private-sector membership organization with a rich legacy of working with government to find solutions to problems that negatively affect our competitiveness and viability.

GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

Suite 1700, 111 South Calvert Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21202-6180
410. 727-2820. Fax 410. 539-5705