

Station North Arts District
A program of Central Baltimore Partnership



DATE: January 20, 2020

BILL NO: **Senate Bill 256**

BILL TITLE: *Arts and Entertainment Districts – Artistic Work and Arts and Entertainment Enterprise - Definitions*

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

Located in the heart of Baltimore, The Station North Arts District (SNAD) was the first area in Baltimore to receive the State designation as an Arts & Entertainment District in 2002. Spanning the historic neighborhoods of Barclay, Charles North, and Greenmount West, SNAD is a diverse collection of artist live-work spaces, maker spaces, galleries, nationally recognized performance venues, rowhomes, and businesses.

The SNAD is an incredible constellation of amazing institutions, artists, and neighborhood leaders. In the last three years, we have started *Annual Asia North Festival*—a celebration of the past and present contributions of Korean-Americans when the area was Baltimore’s unofficial Koreatown. Moreover, SNAD worked with key partners to expand Artscape, hosted regular, free public events every week before the pandemic, co-coordinated annual art markets, nurtured creative entrepreneurial spaces in partnership with the Made In Baltimore program, and created district-wide tours to attract visitors.

Over the past decade, developers and non-profit partners have redeveloped vacant blocks into high-quality affordable artist housing. One of those locations, City Arts Apartments I and II, has received awards in two national competitions for *Low Income Housing Tax Credit* developments. This year the Station North Arts District became a program of the Central Baltimore Partnership, a longtime partner and ally, which will add capacity to more fully engage in district promotion, activation, and artist support measures.

SNAD works closely with the Maryland State Arts Council, attending regular meetings to share updates, funding opportunities, and professional development. We have recently received an MSAC operating grant under MSAC’s Grants for Organizations program, along with two MSAC Emergency Grants that supported staff positions during a pandemic when many were laid off. Both the operating and emergency grants have made it possible for SNAD to plan an ambitious year that focuses on artist advocacy and support, resulting in the management of direct funding via commissions, and innovative virtual event planning.

SNAD supports bill SB256 because we believe more artists and entertainment enterprises will use and benefit from tax incentives the state offers if the terminology and definitions that outline what qualifies is more inclusive and clear. We have heard directly from constituents in our district that the existing language does not represent them, and edits are absolutely required to increase the number of people who take advantage of the benefits. Feedback on more accurate revisions have been gathered over the course of several years directly from the individuals it impacts the most. Any fiscal impact will be small and offset by gains from the activity generated within the district when clear communication on how these tax incentives benefit artists can be more widely shared.

With the goal of increasing the use of these tax incentives to strengthen the role of arts districts across Maryland, we affirm our support for SB625.

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized loop followed by a horizontal line that tapers to the right.

Jack Danna, Director of Commercial Revitalization for Central Baltimore Partnership

Maura Dwyer, Program Coordinator for the Station North Arts District

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