

Proteus Bicycles (College Park, MD)

Statement and Supporting Materials in Support of HB 294

My name is Laurie Lemieux, I'm the owner of Proteus Bicycles in College Park. Our store has been serving Maryland residents since the 1970s. I thank the committee for hearing our views.

Our shop has survived since the 1970s in part due to help from a community of volunteers. When we moved to a bigger location in late 2018 – a former organic market – a retired architect friend volunteered to do the design layout and help us navigate the code requirements.

The renovation work was very simple: it included flooring, drywall patching, electrical cleanup, and some plumbing fixes. We did a lot of the painting and finish work ourselves. There were no structural changes or wall construction. Yet because the cost of the work was more than \$5,000, we had to file a full set of architectural drawings signed by a licensed architect and stamped by a licensed engineer to get permits. The cost of those drawings alone was over \$10,000.

This bill would update the threshold for licensed architectural stamp from \$5,000 to \$25,000. It would be progress in the right direction. The \$5,000 threshold is out of date and presents a huge obstacle to small businesses trying to make minor renovations. HB 294 would make starting or improving a small business in Maryland more accessible.

We're not suggesting that the actual building standards be reduced. As a business owner, I know to hire excellent contractors and trades people to do the work, and understand we have to operate according to code and inspections.

Prince George's county's permit office now has business development advocates to help businesses like Proteus navigate all the red tape. I think HB 294 would give Prince George's the flexibility to implement a more consultative-based permitting system, with less burdensome paperwork requirements for small businesses doing minor rehab work.

Thank you.

Attachments: Photos of the bike shop (pre-pandemic), our strip and other nearby businesses next to Proteus Bicycles



Hollywood Center (North College Park, MD)



Inside the Bike Shop



Hollywood Shopping Center



Vacant Storefronts for Several Years



Across the Street



Neighborhood Old and New – Thrift Store (top), New Spin Studio (bottom)