



**LEGISLATIVE POSITION
SUPPORT
Senate Bill 444/ House Bill 658
Transforming Manufacturing in a Digital Economy Workgroup (Making It In Maryland)**

**Senate Finance Committee/ House Economic Matters Committee
February 16th, 2021/ February 17th, 2021**

Dear Committee Chair and Members:

I am writing this letter to express my support for **Senate Bill SB444/HB 658; entitled, Transforming Manufacturing in a Digital Economy Workgroup (Making it in Maryland).**

I serve as the Executive Director for the Maryland Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MD MEP). MD MEP is a non-profit organization focused on growing and strengthening Maryland manufacturers. Our organization is part of the national MEP Network that helps small and mid-size manufacturers generate business results and thrive in today's technology-driven economy.

As noted in MIT's "Work of the Future Report: Shaping Technology & Institutions" (Fall 2019), "new and emerging technologies will have a profound effect on the work of the future and will create new opportunities for economic growth. Today's challenge, and likely tomorrow's, is not too few jobs. Instead, it is the quality and accessibility of the jobs that will exist and the career trajectories that will be offered to workers, particularly to those with less education."

Through our daily interaction with Maryland manufacturers, MD MEP is constantly reminded of one of the most critical needs of our state's manufacturers: access to a qualified workforce. And because we focus our efforts on small to mid-size manufacturers, we know that many of them struggle to adapt to changing business operations, including digital technologies, that could make them more profitable and competitive within the state and beyond. Often, the primary reason for this challenge is not the lack of resources, but rather, a lack of awareness of the best-fit technology solutions for their operations.

Through the strategic establishment of a statewide "Transforming Manufacturing in a Digital Economy Workgroup," key manufacturing business leaders, academic entities, organizations, policy makers and State agencies can work **in collaboration** to identify technologies, workforce training/education solutions and strategies for employing these technologies and solutions to support manufacturers' transition into the digital economy. By leaving these daunting tasks to individual manufacturing companies, academic institutions, and others on their own, we risk duplication of efforts, wasted resources and potential failure on the road to economic growth for all involved.

For these reasons, I respectfully request this committee to issue a favorable report for Senate Bill 444/ House Bill 658. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael Kelleher
Executive Director, MD MEP