



SOUTHEAST

community development corporation

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Delores Kelley, Chair
Maryland State Finance Committee

Re: SB 526

On behalf of the Highlandtown Arts & Entertainment District, I write today in support of SB 526, which revises and updates definitions related to A&E Districts to clarify which artists are eligible for the state's income tax subtraction modification.

The Highlandtown Arts & Entertainment District is Baltimore City's largest geographic district. Approximately 65 artists live or work here. These artists are painters, sculptors, screen printers, muralists, photographers, potters, writers, jewelry makers, tattoo artists, and more. The district is home to six art galleries, all of which developed creative ways to operate through the pandemic, including outdoor events, virtual gallery tours, and by-appointment-only in-person tours. As of 2020, there are more than 25 pieces of public art spread throughout the district's three neighborhoods, and the district's events and assets are listed among the top reasons residents choose to buy a home in the area.

The Highlandtown Arts & Entertainment District is operated by the Southeast Community Development Corporation, whose staff collaborate with district stakeholders to coordinate events, plan marketing promotions, renovate galleries and arts businesses, install murals, and provide resources to artists and arts organizations. Southeast CDC staff work closely with Maryland State Arts Council to share state-level resources with our district partners. Maryland State Arts Council staff played a key role in assisting Baltimore City's A&E districts in garnering the attention of Baltimore City, which has since funded the A&E districts and provided coordination among the districts and with other city agencies.

Tax incentives are one of the tools we use to leverage the arts for community and economic revitalization as they provide significant support to individual artists who are the essence of our district. We support SB 256 because the updates to the definitions of artistic activities allow us to better communicate this support to entrepreneurs who produce art and strengthen the cultural fabric that attracts investment to our neighborhoods and city. We have been part of the discussions over the last few years that produced these updates and are pleased to see them presented for consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kari Snyder".

Kari Snyder
Executive Director