

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:

It is of critical Importance in establishing the “Transforming Manufacturing in a Digital Economy Workgroup” to educate and prepare the current and future manufacturing workforce in Maryland. Now more than ever, industry leaders have realized that they need to transform towards agile and sustainable manufacturing. Manufacturing companies must be ready for a skill shift with a rising demand for technological, social, and higher cognitive skills. Maryland residents, companies and our society have been affected by the COVID-19 crisis in unimaginable ways. Looking ahead, the industrial companies that take bold action now - in partnership with their workforce and labor institutions - to shore up their workforce and technology investments will emerge more resilient, and more likely to succeed no matter what uncertainties come their way.

Even before the pandemic, labor flexibility, digital transformation and operational excellence were key pillars of an emergent Fourth Industrial Revolution. Now, these areas provide vital lifelines to build resilience during the crisis and beyond. A profound sense of urgency has organizations seeking more pragmatic solutions and approaches to identifying the skills, practices and technologies most important to resilience and a successful recovery and rapidly scaling up the programs they've found to be effective. Technology is evolving and manufacturers need to be prepared and educated for the future of work in Industry 4.0, this includes such factors as: Supporting Inclusive Technology Adoption, Mitigating Workforce Disruption, Supply Chain Disruption, Increased Consumer Expectations, Accelerating Sustainability and Leveraging Data to Unleash Innovation

Stanley Black & Decker, a global manufacturer, has had much success in incorporating Industry 4.0 technologies to include: Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT), Virtual Reality (VR), Robotics, Automation, Artificial Intelligence through Machine Learning, Additive Manufacturing in the form of 3D printing and is pursuing the use of 5G to transmit internal data through high bandwidth, low latency secure networks. Without the support of this workgroup, and partnership with larger corporations like Stanley Black & Decker, smaller Maryland local manufacturing companies may not be prepared to be successful as the industrial world moves forward. This workgroup can focus on job skills for manufacturing roles in Maryland and ensure that the workforce has the capabilities and confidence to work with all these new technologies.

In manufacturing, the importance of workforce development and cross-training on the frontlines is paramount. Manufacturers must be agile to respond to the ever-changing landscape of the industrial world. Technologies such as software that provides just-in-time digital content and learning – like digitized, interactive work procedures that ensure every step is accurately followed and information is readily available via a mobile device – are becoming a factory floor norm. Companies that provide opportunities for employees to build multiple competencies, from advanced manufacturing technical skills to "leadership" skills, will be more resilient in the long term.

Once again, the establishment of the “Transforming Manufacturing in a Digital Economy Workgroup” will prove to be extremely beneficial for the future of manufacturing in the state of Maryland.



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