



LEGISLATIVE POSITION:

FAVORABLE

Senate Bill 444

Transforming Manufacturing in a Digital Economy Workgroup

(Making it in Maryland)

Senate Finance Committee

Tuesday, February 16, 2021

Dear Chairwoman Kelley and Members of the Committee:

Founded in 1968, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce is the leading voice for business in Maryland. We are a statewide coalition of more than 5,000 members and federated partners, and we work to develop and promote strong public policy that ensures sustained economic recovery and growth for Maryland businesses, employees, and families.

The Chamber has consistently supported Maryland businesses of all sizes in their efforts to innovate and modernize in combination with new and emerging technologies. These technologies are rapidly redefining the manufacturing world and, while artificial intelligence and automation has enabled the productivity of highly educated careers, it has had the opposite impact on some workers by quickly replacing them with machines.

In addition to this, in Maryland, the manufacturing industry has seen a large shortage of skilled workers. Last year alone, there were over 5,000 job openings in the manufacturing industry through the Maryland Workforce Exchange. Investing and adapting to provide the current and incoming workforce with new skills is an urgent response to the challenges that have risen due to advances in technology.

Displaced workers, a shortage of new workers, and disparities for minorities in the wake of these industry-level changes are prevalent in Maryland communities. Emerging technologies, while beneficial for some, could possibly exacerbate these pervasive issues. Through the partnership between manufacturers, industry leaders, and education stakeholders, these issues can be explored, and possible solutions can be pursued. SB 444 would address this and acknowledge current and future technological impacts through a Digital Economy Workgroup.

For these reasons, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce respectfully requests a **Favorable Report** on Senate Bill 444.