

March 9, 2022

The Honorable Guy Guzzone, Chair
The Honorable James Rosapepe, Vice Chair
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 3 West Wing
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: S.B. 798, Sales and Use Tax – Vendor Collection Credit – Alteration

Chair Guzzone, Vice-Chair Rosapepe and Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee:

My name is Lisa Rusyniak, President and CEO of Goodwill Industries of the Chesapeake. Goodwill Industries of the Chesapeake is a strong supporter of this bill.

I have worked for Goodwill for over 25 years in every role imaginable. I have been the President and CEO since 2012. This is not only my job but my passion. I often say my goal is to eliminate poverty in our community. Although it may seem like an impossible task, I truly believe the work of this organization and other workforce development agencies are one the keys to eliminating poverty by giving those who have faced hardships an opportunity to succeed.

The purpose of this bill is to allow for qualified job training organizations to keep the taxes that are currently remitted to the state through the sale of donated goods, permitting them to further invest in their communities through workforce development programs. This bill would impact thousands of individuals throughout the State of Maryland by allowing qualified job training organizations to increase their capacity by providing access to quality remedial education, apprenticeships and employer needed skills and jobs.

This tax credit is important as Goodwill provides workforce development services to the population this credit targets. In 2021, Goodwill provided 17,404 services to Baltimore and Eastern Shore residents. Goodwill offers free case management, apprenticeships, and job placement services to those with the most difficult barriers to employment. Our primary focus is on ex-offenders, people who have been chronically unemployed, receiving public assistance, and veterans. Last year, 2,569 program participants filled 916 jobs with employers throughout our territory with an average wage of \$15.16.

As we enter our 104th year of service in Central Maryland and the Eastern Shore, we hope to continue to increase the impact of the workforce development services we provide. In addition to workforce development services, Goodwill's ultimate goal is to open The Excel Center in Baltimore City, an adult high school that would allow individuals twenty-one years of age and over the opportunity to obtain their high school diploma through an accelerated two-year program, while simultaneously engaging in job training. This educational attainment pathway would increase the access our participants have to higher education, apprenticeships and employment opportunities.

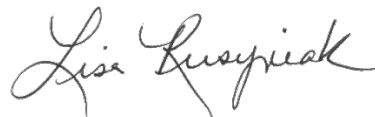
In June 2018, MSDE and DOL approved Goodwill's application to open The Excel Center. Its concept is unlike any current adult education program in Maryland. It is not a program. It is a school! Students will attend classes as prescribed by a curriculum approved by MSDE. Remedial and basic high school course work will be balanced with tangible job skills training and dual credit college level coursework. Students will participate in high quality, deliberate instruction to build basic skills and access the secondary-level instruction that leads to a diploma.

The Excel Center model began in 2010 with a single school in Indiana and now has grown to include 31 schools across five states plus Washington, D.C. The growth of The Excel Center supports thousands of adults across the nation as they work to complete their high school education, increase their independence and reach their potential. Excel Centers operated by Goodwills around the country graduated 1,621 students during the 2018-19 school year. Overall, Excel Centers have now graduated more than 6,300 students. Attaining a high school diploma increases a person's income by an average of \$9,000 per year.

This tax credit will help move families in our communities out of poverty and into prosperity, help to provide a prepared workforce in the state, thus helping to improve our economy.

We urge a favorable report on HB 1264.

Sincerely,



Lisa Rusyniak
President and CEO