



**Maryland Technology Infrastructure Fund Pilot Program  
Statement of Support by Open Works  
Senate Bill 846  
Hearing before Senate Finance Committee, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, 1 PM**

Open Works is a nonprofit makerspace (a public-access workshop) located in Baltimore with a mission to make tools, technology, and the knowledge to use them accessible to all. We fulfill that mission by providing affordable membership access to industrial tools, including metal/welding, woodworking, digital fabrication, sewing, electronics, 3D printing, and digital media; providing technical education in how to use these tools for all ages; and providing studio space to entrepreneurs, small businesses, nonprofits, and artists.

Open Works' diversified operating model has diverse impacts. Since 2016, 211 small businesses have leveraged our facility to create 118 jobs and \$9.9M in statewide annual economic output. Over the same period, Open Works has enrolled 4,194 adults and 411 K-12 youth in technical education programs. Our user community is 44% BIPOC, 42% female, and 8% non-binary – far more diverse than the national average of makerspace users, which is 18% BIPOC and 39% female according to the 2019 Nation of Makers census. In March 2020, Open Works stood up an emergency manufacturing project called Makers Unite, recruiting 388 volunteers across the state to help manufacture 28,270 units of PPE at a time when supply chains were overwhelmed. We activated this capacity again in 2021, producing 863 flat-pack plywood desks that were distributed for free to Baltimore City students struggling with remote learning.

This set of outcomes was shared at the hearing for SB0453 on February 15<sup>th</sup> before this same committee. Open Works strongly believes that SB0846 has similar potential to spur strong grassroots economic growth in Western Maryland, providing a template for innovative growth strategies in other disinvested parts of Maryland. It is a smart, targeted, and inexpensive investment with a long-term upside in job generation, new company creation, and expansion of the tax base. We also see it as part of a larger strategy to make Maryland a “maker state,” building a nimble new manufacturing economy that can beat overseas companies.

This bill again demonstrates Maryland's strength and national leadership in building an innovation economy that creates inclusive prosperity for all.

For these reasons, Open Works encourages a favorable vote on SB0846.

