



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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Senator Melody Griffith, Chair
Senate Finance Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 3 East
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: **TESTIMONY OF SUPPORT**: SB 125: Business Diversity Incubator Program

Dear Chair Griffith, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and Members of the Committee,

I commend Senator Hayes for introducing Senate Bill 125 which would establish a Business Diversity Incubator Program within the Maryland Technology Development Corporation to create diverse and effective business incubators.

Howard County takes pride in the diversity of our residents and businesses. Ensuring that the diversity of our entrepreneurial and innovative private sector has been a long-standing priority. As former Chair of the Howard County Council, I led the initiative for the Howard County Equal Business Opportunity Commission to study the effectiveness of the county's Equal Business Opportunity Program. This program is a county-led initiative that aims to include businesses led by people of color, women and people who are disabled in the county's procurement process for all goods and services. Howard County added 300 businesses to our economy during the pandemic and have continued to expand on our efforts to grow diverse businesses.

Incubators play a key role in providing needed resources to entrepreneurs to help emerging businesses thrive. These programs bring together community partnerships, affordable workspaces, and critical business advisory services. Growing our economy must center on inclusivity and provide access for those who have historically left out of the process.

Promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in our private sector only makes it stronger for all. When government can work with business to provide opportunities for all, our State becomes even more competitive.

I welcome your support and urge a favorable report on SB 125.

All the Best,

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive