

The Honorable Vanessa E. Atterbeary
Chair, Ways and Means
Committee
131 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen St.,
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Jeanelle K. Wilkins
Vice-Chair, Ways and Means
Committee
350 Taylor House Office Building,
6 Bladen St.,
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF HB075 — ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – BUSINESS DIVERSITY
INCUBATOR PROGRAM

Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice-Chair Wilkins, and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee:

As a long-standing community partner, the focus of the Greater Baltimore Black Chamber of Commerce is on the facilitation and creation of business opportunities and resources for black-owned businesses, fostering business growth that results in increases employment of city residents, reinvestment in, and sustainability of predominantly African American communities - this bill paves the way for the type of progress we stand for.

I am a member of the Chamber, and founder of Black Steel, Inc., a physical and cyber-security company. I have also worked in the legal field for most of my adult life. Prior to that as a child I watched like a fly on the wall in the courtroom of my father, the Honorable Paul A. Smith, Sr., as he handled thousands of cases in the Circuit Court for Baltimore City. I am in support of this bill not only because it would fund company creation and innovation throughout the State in under-served communities, but because more jobs mean less crime. It would alleviate the school - to - prison pipeline that is our socio-economically disadvantaged communities at this present day.

As important as the greater Baltimore region is to us, we recognize that a project like this represents more than just the Baltimore area. It represents job opportunities, business opportunities, and community growth and development opportunities for countless citizens throughout the State of Maryland. It represents a future with more thriving businesses, communities, and a business/technology ecosystem that is inclusive of all Marylanders. We want to be a part of this future.

This bill is a bold move with potential for growth and opportunity for so many, and we ask that you submit a favorable report. We recommend that the Maryland Legislature pass this piece of legislation, because it is beneficial to every citizen of Maryland to have not only sustainable, but thriving business ecosystems. In the name of equity, in the name of progress, I submit to you, that this is a ground-breaking piece of legislation and I am in favor of it passing.
Sincerely,

Colby Smith
Founder, Black Steel, Inc - Member,
Greater Baltimore Black Chamber of Commerce
3 S. Frederick St., Suite 801
Baltimore, Maryland 21202