

Sarah Sullivan

3931 Kimble Road, Baltimore MD 21218

Testimony in Support of SB 859 – Fair Share for Maryland Act of 2025

Presented to the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

March 5, 2025

My name is Sarah Sullivan and I am a resident of District 43A. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB 859, the Fair Share for Maryland Act of 2025. I'd like to thank my Delegates Regina Boyce and Elizabeth Embry for sponsoring this bill.

I'm the owner of the Mobtown Ballroom & Café in Baltimore City. We're a community coffee shop and café by day, and an arts venue (with a full bar) by night. We've been in business since 2011, first in the city's Pigtown neighborhood and now in Station North, near the train station.

I support SB 859 and closing corporate loopholes. As a business, if you are making money off a community, you should be paying into it as well. Marylanders are being preyed upon by outside corporations through an infrastructure that allows them to take money from hard working residents while using loopholes to duck tax obligations. This bill would close those loopholes and ensure that big corporations pay their fair share in taxes to go toward infrastructure, schools, and other things Marylanders rely on. It's the least that a corporation operating in our state can do.

Small businesses are essential to the health and wellbeing of neighborhoods. Unlike corporations, they are woven into communities by being created by residents, employing residents, and operating as community stakeholders. Businesses in Station North were hit particularly hard by the pandemic, and we are currently one of the only businesses operating on a largely boarded up block. As stewards of a storefront building, we see it as our duty to contribute to the activation, culture, and safety of the neighborhood. As part of this mission, we work with groups like the Guardians pilot program through the Good Troubles Church, which trains residents to be community mediators and facilitate relationships between neighbors. We've hired them to work at our events, our patrons contribute to their harm reduction trailer, and we're helping to garner funding for the program. We're holding down the fort to make our neighborhood safer and healthier while watching predatory out-of-town developers and fast food restaurants extract wealth from our buildings and neighbors, all while skirting their basic responsibilities to the city and state they operate in.

Our business model is built on keeping resources in the neighborhood; that's what small businesses do. At the same time, by making neighborhoods safer, more inviting, and culturally richer, we're creating value for bigger businesses; we're helping them build bigger profit margins when they don't participate in our community at all.

Here's how our small business model differs from that of big business. We had to move from our location in Pigtown because our building was acquired by a new, wealthy, out-of-town landlord.

He could afford to pay fines, risk punishment, and go faster than the law. He could afford to let properties sit vacant and take a tax write off. But when our business moved, we paid all the relevant fees and taxes to get the new space up to code, nearly bankrupting us in the process. Developers can move fast and break things but I can't afford to operate like they do, and I don't want to.

It's time to right the system, and to hold big businesses to the same standard that small businesses like mine are subject to.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB 859.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Sullivan