

Dear Members of the House Economic Matters Committee,

My name is Daniel Levine, and I am a constituent in District 43A. I am writing to submit favorable testimony for HB15 (cross-filed as SB144). I have been a worker at Baltimore Bicycle Works, a worker-owned cooperative, since 2022.

My background may be unusual for a worker in a bike shop - I started my career in academia, and have worked in non-profits and educational institutions. In those roles, I often studied, taught about, and promoted economic justice and tried to push back against the inequities in our society.

Ultimately, I decided to join a worker cooperative to put my time and energy into a form of economic organization that I believe represents a real opportunity to change how power and wealth are distributed in our society. I appreciate that I and my co-workers are all part of deciding how to run the business, and are treated as equals. I have rarely collaborated more closely with people from a variety of backgrounds.

Making it easier to start co-operatives in Maryland will benefit both workers and the communities they are part of. Cooperatives spread wealth among workers that is often concentrated in the hands of a small number of owners and/or investors in traditional firms. Cooperatives are also generally committed to supporting the community around them and providing economic opportunities - for instance, a core part of what we do at Baltimore Bicycle Works is train apprentices in bike repair, many of whom have little or no experience in the field. Cooperatives can provide an opportunity for people without access to large amounts of capital through traditional means to come together and start small businesses. This bill would make it easier for people to take advantage of the specific benefits of this form of business organization.

For all these reasons, I urge you to support HB15.

Thank you for your time,
Daniel H. Levine
Baltimore, MD