

The Honorable Health and Government Operations Committee  
Maryland General Assembly  
House Office Building  
6 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support for House Bill 508 – State Procurement Preferences for Blind Industries and Services of Maryland

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

As the Chief Executive Officer of Maryland Works, Inc., an organization dedicated to advancing employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities and other barriers to employment, I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 508, introduced by Delegate Kerr. Maryland Works partners with Blind Industries and Services of Maryland (BISM) as part of the state's Preferred Provider Program to provide equitable employment opportunities for people with disabilities, ensuring inclusivity and fostering a diverse workforce across the state.

This bill represents a pivotal opportunity to promote economic equity and inclusivity in Maryland by clarifying procurement preferences for janitorial products packaged *and* repackaged by Blind Industries and Services of Maryland (BISM). By requiring State agencies and contractors to source products from BISM, this legislation reinforces Maryland's commitment to fostering economic independence and professional development for individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

House Bill 508 is a vital step in achieving **several key goals**:

**Economic Empowerment:** Enabling BISM to clarify its operations by including packaging and repackaging provides job stability and growth opportunities for individuals with disabilities, enhancing their ability to achieve economic mobility and self-sufficiency.

**Sustainable Practices:** Partnering with organizations like BISM fosters long-term sustainability by utilizing products that are not only high quality but also produced by dedicated employees whose work supports an inclusive and socially responsible economy.

**Increased Procurement Efficiency:** By leveraging the proven capacity and operational effectiveness of BISM, state entities and their contractors can meet their needs while simultaneously advancing broader social impact goals.

I urge the Health and Government Operations Committee to recognize the significance of this legislation, which aligns with Maryland's long-standing dedication to diversity, equity, and inclusion. And creating meaningful partnerships that enhance the quality of life for individuals with disabilities while bolstering the state's economic growth.

On behalf of Maryland Works and the communities we serve, I thank you for considering this important legislation. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide any additional information or support as the Committee deliberates.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Manzoni". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mary Manzoni

Chief Executive Officer

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