

Tuesday, January 7, 2025

Favorable Testimony

SB0144: Corporations and Associations - Limited Worker Cooperative Associations - Authorization (Maryland Limited Worker Cooperative Association Act)

To whom it may concern:

My name is Deanna Patterson. I have been a member-owner at the Catonsville Cooperative Market since October of 2020, having served on its Board of Directors in 2022, with plans to return to the Board in the future. I have also been a member of the Catonsville Cooperative Preschool since July of 2021, and I have served on its Board of Directors since May 2024, with plans to continue for at least the next 2 years. Cooperative Organizations are a core component of my community, my daily life, my family's daily life, my childrens' education, and my family's diet and health.

When we moved to Catonsville in May of 2020, the Covid Pandemic was an all-consuming part of our lives, affecting every decision we made, and having a significant impact on the establishment of our new community and our place within it. This time also brought a renewed focus on where we decided to spend our money and how we managed our health. In deciding how to best proceed for our family, we learned about the Catonsville Cooperative Market, a small food market that partnered with local farms and vendors to supply organic, seasonal, healthy food and home care options at an affordable price. By joining CCM, we were not only gaining access to potential profits through its cooperative model, but we were also joining a community of like minded people, gaining access to healthy options for our family, connecting with local businesses and creators, and keeping our money in our community and our spending within our values.

When it came time for our oldest child to enter preschool, we again were met with another list of decisions to be made guided by our community, our values, Covid procedures, and cost. We learned about the Catonsville Cooperative Preschool, a small, local, non-profit preschool that emphasized family participation in children's education, and in conjunction, kept tuition costs low by involving families in the backend work required to run and maintain an educational organization (with staffed, certified teachers, of course). We loved having the opportunity to be deeply immersed in our child's entrance into an educational setting, and to be available for them as they transitioned out of being home full-time in Covid quarantines. We appreciated having the chance to be involved in the decision making of the school, to get to know some of the behind the scenes of what that entails, and to, again, be supporting our community by keeping our

money local. While CCP is not a cooperative in the sense of profit sharing at the end of the year (all profits go back into the school for classroom supplies, upgrades, field trips and special guests, events, teacher salaries, and continued education), it is a cooperative in the sharing of the workload and community building. My oldest has since graduated from the preschool, but it is now time for my youngest to enter, and we again chose the Catonsville Cooperative Preschool.

The Catonsville Cooperative Preschool, along with the Toddler Cooperative of Baltimore County, was featured in the Baltimore Banner just this week. The article can be found at:

<https://www.thebaltimorebanner.com/education/early-childhood/cooperative-preschool-baltimore-county-7QQPYKNCLBCWVIEGEETHFLSWZI/> .

The Catonsville Cooperative Market was featured in an interview hosted by OCA Mocha, a local community driven coffee shop in partnership with UMBC. The interview video can be viewed at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UR_5CztJucg&t=1s

The cooperative model, in the many forms in which it can be found, is a valuable and important model. In a time when people's rights and autonomy are being threatened, when large corporations are monopolizing the options available to us in so many spheres, and when community support is all the more vital, Cooperatives give the people their power back. Cooperatives allow people a chance to have a real say, to keep their money where it matters, to spend their time where it matters, and to then get to reap the benefits of that.

My life, my childrens' lives, have been so positively impacted by cooperatives. Having been on the Board of Directors for two cooperative organizations, I've also seen, first hand, the challenges faced by those organizations as they try to work through a system that is not created for their success. SB0144 is an important step in evening the playing field for these organizations and allowing them a fighting chance at making good change for the people and economy of our state.

Thank you for your time, and I hope you, too, will support Cooperatives by voting in favor of SB0144.

Deanna Patterson