

January 8, 2025

My name is Anna Evans-Goldstein, and I encourage you to vote ***favorably*** for SB144/HB15.

I am a lifelong Marylander and have been a strong advocate for workers rights and economic justice my whole career. I currently work for the Baltimore Roundtable for Economic Democracy, and I have previously worked in the labor movement and grassroots social justice work.

Through the development of worker cooperatives, I have had a chance to see how much more resilient and more strategic businesses become as a result of being worker-owned and worker-governed. Worker cooperatives not only become leaders in their respective industries, they also become engaged in their neighborhoods, contribute to their communities through fundraising or in-kind donations, and advocate for their workers' rights and ability to own small businesses.

The absence of a worker co-op statute in Maryland has made the process of starting, converting, and running worker cooperatives much more difficult. Navigating state codes that are not crafted with worker cooperatives in mind, attempting to secure funds for their entrepreneurial enterprises, while juggling the nuances of workplace democracy make our current reality cumbersome for these businesses.

Worker co-ops in Maryland are enduring significant and unnecessary hardships due to the lack of a suitable statute and would greatly benefit from having one that is specifically crafted to support worker cooperatives. This has already taken place in states across the country, and Maryland must follow suit to stay a leader in small business.

This is why I believe that SB144/HB15 will significantly benefit these Maryland small businesses, especially those that economically disenfranchised people are seeking to start up, as a means of escaping generational poverty.

Thank you for your time and attention!

Anna Evans-Goldstein