



Serving Maryland's Eastern Shore and Rural Delmarva Peninsula

March 3, 2026

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB905

Maryland Technology Development Corporation – Maryland Advanced Manufacturing Grant Program

Submitted to the Maryland Senate Finance Committee

On behalf of the Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center (ESEC)

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Finance Committee:

My name is Mike Thielke, and I serve as Executive Director of the Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center (ESEC) in Easton, Maryland. On behalf of ESEC and the entrepreneurs, manufacturers, farmers, and innovators we serve across Maryland's Eastern Shore, I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of SB905 establishing the Maryland Advanced Manufacturing Grant Program within TEDCO.

### **Why SB905 Matters Now**

Maryland is a national leader in research and development. We are home to world-class federal laboratories, universities, and innovative startups. However, our state has historically underperformed in one critical area: converting R&D excellence into in-state advanced manufacturing capacity.

SB905 addresses that gap directly.

The Maryland Advanced Manufacturing Grant Program will provide catalytic capital to help companies transition from innovation to production — from prototype to pilot scale, from pilot to commercial manufacturing. This is precisely the stage where too many Maryland innovations leave the state.

If we want Maryland to lead not only in discovery, but in production, SB905 is essential.

### **Impact on Rural Maryland and the Eastern Shore**

For rural regions like the Eastern Shore, this legislation is transformative.

Manufacturing has long been the backbone of rural economies. Today, the next generation of manufacturing is:

- Bioindustrial production
- Agricultural biologics
- Precision fermentation
- Environmental and climate technologies
- Robotics-enabled processing

*Solving regional problems through the attraction of enterprise, innovation, technology, and partnerships*

**hotDesks**

[hotdesks.org](http://hotdesks.org)

**f<sup>3</sup> TECH**

[f3tech.org](http://f3tech.org)

**CyberAg™**

[cyberag.org](http://cyberag.org)

**Chesapeake Ag**  
Innovation Center

[caic.org](http://caic.org)

March 3, 2026

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB905

Maryland Technology Development Corporation – Maryland Advanced Manufacturing Grant Program

Submitted to the Maryland Senate Finance Committee

Page 2

- Smart materials and advanced fabrication

Through ESEC’s F3 Tech initiative in Easton, we are actively working to commercialize plant- and animal-cell technologies, agricultural biotech, and industrial biomanufacturing innovations. These technologies represent a major expansion of Maryland’s agricultural economy — adding value beyond commodity production and creating high-paying technical jobs in regions that need them most.

But commercialization requires infrastructure and capital.

The Advanced Manufacturing Grant Program would:

- Help early-stage companies scale production within Maryland
- Support capital equipment acquisition
- De-risk facility buildout
- Enable pilot-to-commercial transition
- Strengthen regional manufacturing ecosystems

For rural counties, this means:

- New high-wage jobs
- Expanded tax base
- Increased local supplier networks
- Greater retention of homegrown companies
- Expanded markets for Maryland-grown feedstocks and raw materials

This is not theoretical. It is happening nationally. Maryland must compete.

### **Strengthening Maryland’s Innovation-to-Manufacturing Pipeline**

SB905 aligns directly with Maryland’s broader economic strategy to:

- Grow advanced industries
- Support domestic supply chain resilience
- Expand industrial biotechnology and clean manufacturing
- Retain federal and private investment
- Diversify regional economies

Maryland already invests significantly in early-stage innovation through TEDCO programs. SB905 completes the pipeline by addressing the “manufacturing scale-up gap” — often the most capital-intensive and difficult stage for startups.

Without this support, companies frequently:

- Relocate to states with stronger manufacturing incentives
- Outsource production overseas
- Delay commercialization
- Or fail altogether

March 3, 2026

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB905

Maryland Technology Development Corporation – Maryland Advanced Manufacturing Grant Program

Submitted to the Maryland Senate Finance Committee

Page 3

This program helps ensure that Maryland innovations become Maryland-made products.

### **A Strategic Investment, Not a Subsidy**

The Advanced Manufacturing Grant Program is not simply a financial assistance program. It is a strategic economic development tool.

Every dollar invested in advanced manufacturing:

- Multiplies through supply chains
- Anchors long-term job creation
- Increases exports
- Enhances national competitiveness
- Supports federal priorities in biosecurity, energy resilience, and supply chain independence

Advanced manufacturing jobs also pay significantly above median wages and require a skilled workforce — reinforcing workforce development partnerships across community colleges and universities.

For the Eastern Shore, this represents the opportunity to evolve from a resource-based economy to a value-added production economy — while strengthening our traditional industries of agriculture and seafood.

### **A Statewide Opportunity**

While this testimony reflects our Eastern Shore perspective, SB905 benefits all regions of Maryland:

- Western Maryland manufacturing clusters
- Baltimore industrial innovation zones
- I-270 life sciences corridor
- Southern Maryland defense and technology base
- Prince George’s County research ecosystem

By creating a statewide advanced manufacturing grant mechanism, Maryland positions itself as a complete innovation state — from lab bench to production line.

### **Conclusion**

SB905 is timely, strategic, and necessary.

It supports:

- Innovation retention
- Regional equity
- Rural revitalization
- Workforce development
- Domestic manufacturing strength

March 3, 2026

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB905

Maryland Technology Development Corporation – Maryland Advanced Manufacturing Grant  
Program

Submitted to the Maryland Senate Finance Committee

Page 4

- And long-term economic resilience

On behalf of the Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center, I respectfully urge the Finance Committee to issue a favorable report on SB905 and advance this critical legislation.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "M Thielke".

Michael Thielke  
Executive Director