



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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Senator Guy Guzzone, Chair
Budget and Tax Committee
3 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21041

Re: Testimony **IN SUPPORT** of SB 826: Economic Development – Makerspace Initiative Pilot Program

Dear Chairman Guzzone,

I commend Senator McCray and Delegate McIntosh for introducing Senate Bill 826 and House Bill 1455, which would establish a Makerspace Initiative Pilot Program and Fund within the Maryland Technology Development Corporation to encourage the establishment and expansion of makerspaces throughout our State.

Maryland's makerspaces offer our startups, small businesses, and entrepreneurs a collaborative work environment. They develop and share new products, learn about new tools and techniques, and explore ideas about the role of craftsmanship in an increasingly digitized world. I am encouraged that SB 826 would dedicate State funding from Fiscal Year 2022 to Fiscal Year 2024 to support such spaces, not only in Western Maryland but also in jurisdictions across our state.

In January, I toured OpenWorks Baltimore, one of the largest nonprofit makerspaces in the country, where local small businesses and nonprofit organizations can use 34,000 square feet of fabrication shops, studio spaces, and classrooms to learn and apply new skills, launch a new business or network with other creators. This grant and member funded makerspace contributes \$9.5 million to Maryland's economy each year. A State investment in our makerspaces would not only benefit the individuals and organizations that use them, but would also help grow Maryland's economy overall.

Howard County and the Town of Sykesville are partnering to create Skykesville's first makerspace on a site that previously supported industrial uses in the late 18th century. The Apple Butter Warehouse, located in South Branch Park and bordering Carroll County, is a historic facility that plans to be renovated into a makerspace for youth and adults and serve as an innovation hub and a community center. This space would not only prepare our children for the jobs of tomorrow, but would also bolster historic preservation efforts and improve tourism and quality of life in downtown Sykesville.

Senate Bill 826 could provide jurisdictions like ours with additional resources to ensure that our residents, businesses, and nonprofits can tap into the power of creativity and collaboration to enhance themselves, our communities, and our State.

I welcome your partnership and a favorable report on SB 826.

All the best,

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive