



## HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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February 15, 2022

Senator Delores G. Kelley, Chair  
Senate Finance Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building, 3 East  
Annapolis, MD 21041

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

Re: Testimony **IN SUPPORT** of SB 453: Economic Development – Maryland Makerspace Initiative Program

Dear Chair Kelley and Chair Guzzone,

I commend Senator McCray for introducing Senate Bill 453 which would establish a Makerspace Initiative Program 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 453 would dedicate State funding from 2022-2028 to support such spaces in jurisdictions across our state.

Prior to COVID-19, 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 communities for the jobs of tomorrow but would also bolster historic preservation efforts and improve tourism and quality of life in downtown Sykesville and other small towns like it.

Senate Bill 453 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 453.

All the best,

Calvin Ball  
Howard County Executive