



TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE SENATE BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE

**SENATE BILL 577 -- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT --
MAKERSPACE INITIATIVE PILOT PROGRAM**

Senators McCray and Edwards

February 23, 2021

**DONALD C. FRY
PRESIDENT & CEO**

GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

Position: Support

Senate Bill 577 establishes the Makerspace Initiative Pilot Program in the Maryland Technology Development Corporation (TEDCO). The pilot program would award financial assistance for the establishment or expansion of makerspaces for fiscal years 2022, 2023, and 2024. The bill requires the Governor to appropriate at least \$300,000 annually for the Makerspace Initiative Pilot Program.

A makerspace is a collaborative work space for making, learning, exploring, and sharing that uses high tech to no tech tools. Makerspaces provide a tangible economic development and workforce training benefits because they provide students with access to experts in a variety of fields meant to nurture an entrepreneurial spirit that is so important in a modern economy. Providing students with new opportunities to learn and innovate through 21st century skills and training, including the use of real world applications for classroom concepts, is paramount. Makerspaces accomplish this by providing young people with future employment opportunities to either create new companies or find employment in a multitude of creative workplaces.

This bill is consistent with a key tenet in *Gaining the Competitive Edge: Keys to Economic Growth and Job Creation in Maryland*, a report published by the GBC that identifies eight core pillars for a competitive business environment and job growth:

Strategic and effective investments in business growth. The State must commit to substantive strategic investments, leveraged with capital assets, to nurture business and job growth. Investments should include competitive and effective tax credits, business development incentives, and tactical initiatives to nurture private investments in industry growth.

This bill is also consistent with the GBC's legislative priorities for 2021:

Strengthen the education and workforce systems to prioritize equity, accountability, and alignment with Maryland's high-growth industry sectors. Preparing the workforce to be successful in tomorrow's economy requires innovative thinking, industry-specific training programs, and career pathways. Policymakers should enact legislation that ensures the state's workforce has well-trained workers at all skill levels.

Advocate for inclusive policies and programs that strengthen economic competitiveness and job creation. Support a strong and inclusive economic development ecosystem that improves the business climate, creates jobs, and cultivates entrepreneurship.

For these reasons, the Greater Baltimore Committee urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 577.

The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) is a non-partisan, independent, regional business advocacy organization comprised of hundreds of businesses -- large, medium and small -- educational institutions, nonprofit organizations and foundations located in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard counties as well as Baltimore City. The GBC is a 66-year-old, private-sector membership organization with a rich legacy of working with government to find solutions to problems that negatively affect our competitiveness and viability.

GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

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