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**NATION OF
MAKERS**

Testimony Presented to the House Ways and Means Committee

HB1455 - Makerspace Initiative Pilot Program

January 27, 2021

Nation of Makers is a national nonprofit committed to supporting America's maker organizations through community building, resource sharing, and advocacy. Much of the work we do takes place locally, on the state and regional level, supporting local maker organizations and ecosystems to enhance the impact of the maker movement nationally. Our Nation of Makers' Champions program identifies local leaders who are championing the maker movement in their region, and supports them as they foster a local ecosystem that not only furthers the maker movement, but also the economic, social, and cultural impact that maker organizations have on the local economy. In support of our mission, we are proud to partner with local maker organizations, such as Open Works, who are having a significant economic/social/cultural impact within their community, to create opportunities for all Americans to succeed through making where they live.

Open Works, in particular, has quickly grown into a national leader in the maker movement. This impactful makerspace has set a new precedent for the ability of makerspaces to deliver economic impact, diversified a field that has historically low representation of ethnic and racial minorities and women, and delivered high-quality educational programming in fabrication, design, and entrepreneurship to learners of all ages and backgrounds in Maryland. In a field with limited documented best practices, Open Works has developed a valuable set of operational competencies that can help other municipalities in Maryland derive similar economic, social, and educational benefits from the makerspaces within their community.

Additionally, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Open Works has demonstrated the tremendous capacity and value of local makerspaces to serve their communities. Facing unprecedented medical supply shortages, Maryland found itself in a similar situation as the rest of the United States. Makers, makerspaces, and maker groups responded across the country to fill critical supply

shortages and to provide PPE for healthcare and essential workers, and our most vulnerable communities in need - producing and distributing over 37 million units of medical supplies domestically within the United States. I'm proud to report that, as a part of this incredible effort, Open Works, through its Makers Unite program, produced 28,270 face shields over 55 days for over 100 Maryland clients, from local hospitals to federal agencies.

The proposed legislation creates a non-lapsing fund to be administered by TEDCO that would support the dissemination of Open Works' best practices to other makerspaces and municipalities establishing makerspaces in the State of Maryland. This legislation will help other new organizations increase their ability to deliver high-quality just-in-time services to communities in need, quickly scale their audience, and produce sustainable, grassroots economic growth. Furthermore, this bill will help ensure the financial viability of public-facing makerspaces in Maryland by providing operational support that can be leveraged for greater growth, productivity, and private fundraising.

We are proud of the work that Open Works is doing within the great state of Maryland, and we are excited for the promise of HB1455 and the positive economic impact it will have on the entire state. For these reasons, Nation of Makers encourages a favorable vote on HB1455.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Jones-Davis', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dorothy Jones-Davis, PhD
Executive Director, Nation of Makers