



The Honorable Anne R. Kaiser
131 House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Legislative Support for House Bill 1342 – Economic Development – Partnership for Workforce Quality, March 11, 2021

Dear Committee Chair and Members:

I am writing this letter to express my support for House Bill 1342; entitled Economic Development – Partnership for Workforce Quality – Program Alterations.

Maryland’s Partnership for Workforce Quality (PWQ) program has been an invaluable resource for the manufacturing sector, enabling manufacturers of all sizes and all industries to provide training in an effort to upskill their existing workforce. Workforce and talent development remains the greatest challenge faced by manufacturers throughout the State of Maryland. PWQ has providing funding assistance, enabling these manufacturers to train and upskill their existing workforce through incumbent worker training, yielding significant results. House Bill 1342 will enable manufacturers to expand this training to include newly hired individuals, addressing the increasing skills gap in the manufacturing sector and positively impact a greater number of Maryland manufacturing organizations.

I serve as the Executive Director for the Maryland Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MD MEP). MD MEP is a non-profit organization focused on growing and strengthening Maryland manufacturers. On an annual basis, MD MEP administers funding and programs that create more than \$150 million in economic impact and create or retain more than 1,100 jobs.

Since 2018, MD MEP has referred nearly a dozen manufacturers to the PWQ program for funding assistance to offset the cost of training for their incumbent workforce. Through these efforts, these companies have trained 266 workers on critical manufacturing skills like machining, welding, process improvement, quality and the adoption of new technologies and equipment. These training activities and the resultant impacts would not have been possible without the support of PWQ.

The expansion of PWQ to provide training to newly hired workers will increase this impact and improve the overall competitiveness of Maryland within the manufacturing sector. For these reasons, I am strongly in support of House Bill 1342. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael Kelleher
Executive Director, MD MEP