

**Makerspace Initiative Pilot Program  
Statement of Support by Open Works  
SB453 – Maryland Makerspace Initiative Program  
Hearing before the House of Delegates Ways and Means Committee – 3/30/2022 at 1 PM**

Open Works is a nonprofit makerspace (a public-access workshop) located in Baltimore with a mission to make tools, technology, and the knowledge to use them accessible to all. We fulfill that mission by providing affordable membership access to industrial tools, including metal/welding, woodworking, digital fabrication, sewing, electronics, 3D printing, and digital media; providing technical education in how to use these tools for all ages; and providing studio space to entrepreneurs, small businesses, nonprofits, and artists.

Open Works' diversified operating model has diverse impacts. Since 2016, 211 small businesses have leveraged our facility to create 118 jobs and \$9.9M in statewide annual economic output. Over the same period, Open Works has enrolled 4,194 adults and 411 K-12 youth in technical education programs. Our user community is 44% BIPOC, 42% female, and 8% non-binary – far more diverse than the national average of makerspace users, which is 18% BIPOC and 39% female according to the 2019 Nation of Makers census. In March 2020, Open Works stood up an emergency manufacturing project called Makers Unite, recruiting 388 volunteers across the state to help manufacture 28,270 units of PPE at a time when supply chains were overwhelmed. We activated this capacity again in 2021, producing 863 flat-pack plywood desks that were distributed for free to Baltimore City students struggling with remote learning.

Open Works strongly believes other communities in Maryland can derive similar benefits by building makerspaces, especially as communities struggle to dig out of the interlocking economic, educational, and health crises triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic. Further, creating a network of public makerspaces will scale additional operational efficiencies and funding opportunities. The proposed legislation creates a non-lapsing fund to be administered by TEDCO that would support the expansion and establishment of further makerspaces in the State of Maryland, significantly scaling the current impacts of Open Works' current location. Creating a network of five locations would have the following impacts:

**Economic Impact**

- In 2019, state and local tax revenues generated by Open Works and associated businesses topped \$450,000.
- Five locations will produce \$45M in annual economic impact, \$2.25M in annual tax revenues, and 600 jobs through direct employment and startup creation.

**Educational Impact**

- In 2019, Open Works enrolled 1,339 adults and 171 youth in technical education classes.
- 5 locations could educate 6,700 adults and 850 youth annually.

**Emergency Resilience**

- Based on Open Works' experience with Makers Unite, we could organize a civil manufacturing reserve to provide supply chain resilience in case of natural disaster, terror attack, or pandemic.

**Workforce Development**

- In late 2021, Open Works was awarded \$223,000 from the City of Baltimore to run a two-year apprenticeship program for industrial sewing machine operators.
- 5 locations will provide the scale to address the diverse workforce needs of manufacturers and tech companies across the state and better compete with Pennsylvania, Washington D.C., and



Virginia.

Constructing a makerspace network would immediately catapult Maryland into a national leadership role in cultivating an innovation economy, and have profound implications on the next 25 years of economic growth, workforce development, STEM educational excellence, disaster preparedness, and startup activity.

For these reasons, Open Works encourages a favorable vote on SB453.

