

Council Bill 21-0022R
Official Testimony
Position: **FAVORABLE**

To the Education, Workforce, and Youth Committee, and Baltimore City Council,

My name is Declan McKenna. I am an artist, living in Baltimore for the past 4 years, and a student at the Maryland Institute College of Art. I also served as a Research Assistant for the Arts and Culture Transition Committee in previous months. Like many artists, my work has been drastically decreased during the pandemic, and much of my previous work has been freelance, volunteer, or through grants and scholarships. Therefore, I have been unable to receive Employment Assistance.

My position as a student does not detract from the work myself and other students have done across the city and in our lives. We are working artists much the same, and *all* working artists deserve the same assistance other industries have been able to receive. Just because society has created unique routes of working for artists, that do not feed into the unemployment system, our need for help during this time is no different.

During my time on the committee, I was surrounded by artists, the hearts of Baltimore, who dreamed of turning this city into a mecca for artists. That begins with providing the conditions to survive. Most, if not all, of the members on the committee stressed the importance of living wages for artists. They have been working in this city for years, they are experts on what we need. This recommendation ended up on the final report, highlighting the importance of this action. Without financial support, the growth and beauty of the art industry that we strive for cannot happen.

Baltimore would stand out as a city that cares for its artists, showing the world that this *is* a place for us. If Baltimore wants to keep having the culture and talents of its artists, that are so often used for festivals, events, and tourism, now is the time to act.

I encourage a favorable vote to this resolution, for direct financial support for artists, so we can keep bringing our art to this city.

Sincerely,

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