

Commerce Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1179

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE CONNECTICUT COMMUNITY MAKERSPACE

Title: INITIATIVE PROGRAM.

Vote Date: 3/20/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/11/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Sen. Julie Kushner, 24th District.

Rep. Michael D. Quinn, 82nd District.

Rep. Steven Winter, 94th District.

Sen. Gary A. Winfield, 10th District.

Rep. Trenee McGee, 116th District.

Rep. Michael "MJ" Shannon, 117th District.

Sen. MD Rahman, 4th District.

Sen. Saud Anwar, 3rd District.

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill aims to boost Connecticut's economy by supporting innovation in makerspaces and manufacturing. It establishes a pilot program to provide financial assistance for creating or expanding makerspaces, promoting entrepreneurship and education. The bill also creates the Connecticut Manufacturing Innovation Fund to support manufacturing modernization, advanced technology, and job creation, especially in industries like aerospace and medical devices. Priority is given to businesses in underserved communities. Additionally, a voucher program will offer technical expertise to help businesses overcome challenges. This bill fosters economic growth, technological advancement, and job creation in key sectors.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None Expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Devra Sisitsky, Founder and Executive Director, MakerspaceCT Hartford](#): She highlights the makerspace's role as a vital hub for workforce development, innovation, and economic growth in Connecticut. Since opening in 2019, MakerspaceCT has provided hands-on education, technical training, and advanced manufacturing access to over 1,200 residents annually, helping bridge the gap between industry needs and workforce readiness. She supports all makerspaces across Connecticut and endorses SB1179 but urges inclusivity in funding to ensure emerging makerspaces are not excluded. She recommends forming a working group to expand funding opportunities. She invites legislators to visit MakerspaceCT and encourages continued investment in programs that support workforce development and entrepreneurship, emphasizing their importance for Connecticut's economic future.

[Vlad Alexandrescu, Aeolian Kitesurfing LLC](#): He's a member of Makehaven for nearly 10 years and shares how they used the makerspace's tools to develop and prototype their product, the Triple Action Pump, for the kitesurfing industry. They grew the business, Aeolian, which now distributes products globally, thanks to the resources available at Makehaven. He emphasizes that makerspaces provide crucial, affordable tools and instruction for entrepreneurs and small businesses.

[Josephine Ankrah](#): He's a member of MakeHaven for about five years, and he highlights the valuable skills they've learned and projects they've completed, from pottery and textiles to woodworking and metalworking. He also has contributed to community efforts like maintaining a garden. He emphasizes that MakeHaven is a vital resource for hands-on learning, entrepreneurship, and community building in Connecticut, supporting small businesses, skill development, and economic growth.

[Anonymous Anonymous](#): They're a member of the Fairfield County Makers' Guild for two years, has gained valuable skills like laser cutting, 3D printing, and CNC machining, while connecting with a community of entrepreneurial makers. This involvement has significantly boosted their small business revenue. They emphasize that makerspaces are crucial for entrepreneurs and learners, offering access to tools that support small businesses, skill development, and economic growth in Connecticut.

[Jon B](#): "I support more makerspace in our state."

[Nick Baccala](#): He joined MakeHaven to access tools and learn new skills for hobbies but found much more, including a network of local makers, artisans, and entrepreneurs. This network has been invaluable in helping plan their independent retail store in Milford. He believes makerspaces are essential for entrepreneurs, providing resources for prototyping and a community for collaboration. Their store will support the local economy by offering handmade products from New Haven artisans, highlighting the importance of makerspaces for small businesses and economic growth in Connecticut.

[Larry Backes](#): He's been a member of Make Haven in New Haven for three years, where they taught themselves to program a CNC machine and manufacture their product, Ruff Ramp, which helps immobile dogs get over staircases. After a contract manufacturer failed to fulfill an order, Make Haven allowed the author to produce their product in Connecticut. Thanks to Make Haven, they've been able to grow their business, hire part-time employees, and develop new product ideas. The author credits the makerspace with providing affordable resources and a supportive community, which has been crucial to their success and ongoing learning.

[Abell Barret](#): He's an entrepreneur and machine learning engineer with 12 years of experience, highlights the importance of community makerspaces like MakeHaven in fostering entrepreneurship, skill development, and a strong, supportive community. Through MakeHaven, the author has witnessed businesses being created, patents filed, and ideas exchanged. The space has allowed for collaboration, such as helping engineers learn machine learning and supporting product development. He also values the social connections made at MakeHaven, which have enriched their personal and professional life since moving to Connecticut.

[Adam Bazylczyk](#): He's a member of MakeHaven since September, emphasizes how makerspaces provide valuable skills that lead to entrepreneurship, advocacy, and empowerment. Through MakeHaven, he's developed design and fabrication skills that have helped both friends with their small businesses and the author in launching their own. He also highlights MakeHaven's reduced-cost membership and classes, which are crucial for equitable access, though rising costs make this challenging.

[Bailee Beckett](#): Makerspaces are hubs of creativity and collaboration, offering access to tools and expertise that help individuals—whether students, entrepreneurs, or artists—bring their ideas to life. They support small businesses and startups by providing low-cost resources for prototyping and innovation. Makerspaces foster inclusivity, reduce waste by sharing tools, and promote sustainable practices. Investing in makerspaces strengthens creativity, innovation, and community resilience.

[Julie Bernblum](#): Makerspaces like MakeHaven are valuable community assets, offering affordable access to equipment and education. As a member and landlord of MakeHaven, he has been able to complete projects that would otherwise be impossible due to the high cost of tools. Makerspaces provide a risk-free environment for learning new skills, with support from facilitators and a diverse network of members for collaboration and innovation. The educational and entrepreneurial benefits are unparalleled.

[Kate Berrigan](#): She's been a member of Spark Makerspace in New London for three years, where the community fosters collaboration across diverse groups. They teach woodshop classes catering to all skill levels, helping participants develop both technical skills and creativity. Makerspaces provide essential resources for entrepreneurs, inventors, and learners, offering access to tools, inspiration, and collaboration. Supporting makerspaces helps small businesses, skill development, and economic growth in Connecticut.

[Clara Biesel](#): She compares their friend Dave's woodworking success, which was made possible by his income and space, to the opportunities provided by Makehaven. Makehaven offers everyone access to tools and resources, regardless of financial means, and fosters a diverse, inclusive community. She emphasizes the importance of supporting SB 1179 to ensure that spaces like Makehaven continue to thrive, fostering creativity, community, and innovation.

[Owen Biesel](#): He discovered MakeHaven through a local "maker's market" and was impressed by the quality of products created by community members. He highlights how MakeHaven provides shared space and equipment, allowing entrepreneurs to collaborate and access resources without needing to invest heavily on their own.

[Elaine Braithwaite, Librarian, Bridgeport Public Library](#): The bill will provide access to essential tools for innovation and entrepreneurship, benefiting residents, especially in cities like Bridgeport. The library is actively involved in these efforts and welcomes the support the bill offers to expand resources and outreach to the makerspace community.

[Sean O'Brien, Founder & CEO, PrivacySafe](#): As an entrepreneur and educator, the individual has benefited from access to makerspaces like MakeHaven, using the tools and collaborative environment to prototype hardware and software for their Connecticut-based businesses. These resources have been crucial for developing new technologies at a lower cost. They have also taught workshops to local students, helping them gain technical skills and foster innovation in the community. Makerspaces offer hands-on learning that bridges the gap between theory and practice for aspiring entrepreneurs and students.

[Brenda Brown](#): She highlights various experiences at MakeHaven, such as taking safety and first aid classes, organizing events, and participating in activities like robotics demonstrations and soldering lessons. She believes every city should have a makerspace for people to share interests and access tools to create, with funding to ensure affordability for those with limited means. She argues that supporting makerspaces is necessary for community enhancement.

[Miki C](#): "As a FGLI (first gen low income) student, spaces like Make Haven have allowed me to explore art and creation both as a hobby and source of income. It's an incredible place; every time a friend or family member visits New Haven, it's one of the first places I take them."

[Darcy Canales Sr](#): She emphasizes that makerspaces are more than just places for creating; they offer valuable opportunities for people from all walks of life. They highlight the importance of makerspaces as networking hubs for entrepreneurs and inventors, which ultimately benefits the economy.

[Christopher Cane](#): He and his wife were gifted memberships to MakeHaven, where they've quickly gained new skills, such as sewing, woodworking, laser engraving, and studying for an amateur radio exam. They also reconnected with friends and have long recognized the value of MakeHaven and other regional makerspaces in supporting their communities.

[Andrew Carrs](#): He emphasizes that access to makerspaces is crucial for business growth, particularly in design and manufacturing. He runs a small business in Connecticut and have found that building components locally offers significant advantages over outsourcing, including faster prototyping, quicker product turnaround, easier integration of new materials, faster customer approvals, and lower shipping costs. While initial costs may be slightly higher, the benefits of speed, reduced shipping costs, and fewer delays outweigh the extra expense.

[Kate Cebik](#): During the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, MakeHaven makerspace played a crucial role in community support and innovation. Members and volunteers collaborated via Zoom to share skills and create essential supplies. They organized a free mask-making initiative, producing and distributing over 6,000 masks to frontline workers. Additionally, they fabricated face shields and worked with Yale New Haven Hospital to design custom intubation shields for medical staff. Amid supply chain disruptions, the makerspace and its network of creators stepped up to fill critical gaps, demonstrating the power of community-driven problem-solving.

[Stephen Cebik](#): MakeHaven provides a creative and hands-on outlet for a publishing professional, fostering problem-solving skills and new ways of thinking. Makerspaces are vital for entrepreneurs, inventors, and hands-on learners, offering access to high-quality tools—from safe woodshops to advanced manufacturing equipment like 3D printers and CNC waterjets. By supporting makerspaces, communities invest in small businesses, skill development, and economic growth in Connecticut.

[Connor Chapin](#): After moving back to Connecticut, he sought out a makerspace and found a supportive community at FCMG in Norwalk. There, they connected with people skilled in various crafts, from woodworking to electronics. Over the past year, they have learned to use 3D printers and laser cutters, begun exploring electronics and soldering, built weaving looms, and made many new friends.

[Jason Clemence](#): "I support funding for the makerspace initiative."

[John O'Connell](#): "MakeHaven has given me skills to create useful and artistic works that have opened business opportunities that I am passionate and currently working on!"

[Marley Connor](#): MakeHaven provides essential tools, space, and community support that enable my partner and me to run our small business and support our family. It fosters both personal and professional growth while offering a collaborative environment for learning and mutual support.

[Liz Corbett](#): She joined MakeHaven in 2023 to be part of a creative community, and it has been an incredible experience. This makerspace provides the ideal environment for learning and creating while fostering innovation and support. Connecticut should continue investing in makerspaces, as they drive creativity, entrepreneurship, and hands-on learning for all.

[Tim Cowan](#): He joined MakeHaven to restore a broken antique lamp my late grandfather cherished, hoping to feel connected to him. With a facilitator's guidance, I not only repaired it but also upgraded it with a touch-sensitive base. Now, it shines in his living room as both a tribute to his grandfather and a testament to the power of hands-on learning.

[Paul Delano](#): As a past member of the Fairfield County Makers Guild, he has benefited from its expertise and resources, using CAD and 3D printing to develop an invention. Though not currently a member, he still attends events and seek guidance from the community. As an engineer, artist, and inventor, he sees FCMG as an essential local resource for creativity and innovation.

[Preston Dennett](#): "Working to commercialize a new technology from Yale University, access to the tools and support at Makehaven has been essential for building and testing our prototype instruments and launching the business."

[Jason Dia](#): "I have been a member on an off since 2018 of Makehaven in New Haven, Connecticut. Since my first time visiting The Space, I felt nothing but acceptance and welcome. Makehaven gives me a place to learn and grow new ways to contribute to my community and find mentorship in areas that I might otherwise not be able."

Sixty-eight people, members of MakeHaven and other individuals, have written submitted testimonies that are aligned with similar believes that these makerspaces are hubs of creativity and collaboration, offering access to tools and expertise that help individuals—whether students, entrepreneurs, or artists—bring their ideas to life. They support small businesses and startups by providing low-cost resources for prototyping and innovation. Makerspaces foster inclusivity, reduce waste by sharing tools, and promote sustainable practices. Investing in makerspaces strengthens creativity, innovation, and community resilience. Connecticut should continue investing in makerspaces, as they drive creativity, entrepreneurship, and hands-on learning for all.

[Here's the link to the testimony page:](#)

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Austin Adil

Date: 4/1/2025