

Levinson lobbies for state film incentives

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Baltimore filmmaker Barry Levinson urged lawmakers yesterday to authorize a rebate for the state's film industry, and Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller expressed support for the measure.

Levinson said he has opted to shoot movies in Canada over his native Maryland because of tax incentives. Several Maryland-themed movies, such as *Hairspray* and *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, have also been filmed elsewhere.

"It's a shame these Maryland movies move out of state," Miller said. "It's a travesty."

Despite an economic climate that makes costly bills unlikely to pass this year, Miller said that if the rebate program "can be shown to be a benefit" to Maryland's economy, it would be "penny-wise and pound-foolish" to reject it.

"You're not simply giving money away," said Levinson, the creator of Baltimore-based movies *Diner*, *Avalon* and *Tin Men*. "You would be giving a discount in terms of the money that comes in."

Under the proposal advocated by the Maryland Film Industry Coalition, filmmakers would receive a "post-expenditure rebate" of about 28 percent of qualified spending on in-state production.

But at an afternoon news conference, Gov. Martin O'Malley did not embrace the idea.

"I'm very receptive to any business that wants to come to Maryland," O'Malley said. But, he added, "I can't look at people who are already taking cuts and sacrificing and tell them that we should be cutting big cash-back checks to Hollywood."



Del. Melony Ghee Griffith speaks as Greater Baltimore Committee's Donald C. Fry (right) and director Barry Levinson look on.

