

Chapter 138

(House Bill 940)

AN ACT concerning

Office of the Business Ombudsman – State Customer Service and Business Development Efforts Training Program

FOR the purpose of establishing the State Customer Service and Business Development Efforts Training Program; requiring the Office of the Business Ombudsman to administer and oversee the program; specifying the purpose of the program; requiring certain agencies to participate in the program; requiring the Office to develop certain customer service standards; requiring agencies participating in the program to create a certain customer service plan, develop and conduct certain customer service trainings, establish a certain employee recognition program, and report certain information each year; requiring the Office to evaluate and make certain recommendations regarding the program; requiring the Office to include certain information in a certain annual report; and generally relating to the State Customer Service and Business Development Efforts Training Program.

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

Article – Economic Development
Section 14–203 and 14–204
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2008 Volume and 2014 Supplement)

BY adding to

Article – Economic Development
Section 14–204
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2008 Volume and 2014 Supplement)

Preamble

WHEREAS, The report of the Maryland Economic Development and Business Climate Commission indicated that one of the most important changes needed to improve the economic climate in the State is to fundamentally change the perceived attitude of State agencies in their role and responsibility of facilitating economic development and job creation; and

WHEREAS, The private sector needs predictability, transparency, and responsiveness from State government in order to have the confidence to invest in job creation activities; and

WHEREAS, A change in the manner in which State agencies interact with the public and those seeking to grow and expand businesses in the State does not require a significant financial investment but will require a major management commitment by the State; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 641 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2014 established the Office of the Business Ombudsman in the Office of the Governor to implement a business fairness and responsiveness service with other State agencies; and

WHEREAS, Customer service and business development of multiple State agencies should be a centralized effort; now, therefore,

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Economic Development

14–203.

The Office shall:

(1) establish, maintain, and update each year a list of the business assistance programs and services in the State, including the names, locations, Web site addresses, and telephone numbers of the entities providing the programs and services;

(2) implement a business fairness and responsiveness service that:

(i) resolves problems encountered by businesses with other State agencies and regional and local economic development organizations;

(ii) coordinates programs and services implemented by federal, State, and local agencies;

(iii) facilitates responsiveness of State government to business needs;
and

(iv) reports to the Governor and the General Assembly regarding any breakdowns in the delivery of economic development resources and programs;

(3) develop and maintain a program to provide comprehensive information to the public regarding permits required for business initiatives, projects, and activities;
[and]

(4) establish and implement procedures to assist permit applicants who have encountered difficulties in obtaining timely and efficient permit review; **AND**

(5) ADMINISTER AND OVERSEE THE STATE CUSTOMER SERVICE AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS TRAINING PROGRAM UNDER § 14-204 OF THIS SUBTITLE.

14-204.

(A) THERE IS A STATE CUSTOMER SERVICE AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS TRAINING PROGRAM.

(B) THE PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM IS TO INCREASE THE RESPONSIVENESS OF AND IMPROVE CUSTOMER SERVICE PROVIDED BY STATE AGENCIES TO BUSINESSES AND CUSTOMERS IN THE STATE.

(C) THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES SHALL PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM:

(1) THE DEPARTMENT;

(2) THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF ASSESSMENTS AND TAXATION;

(3) THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT;

(4) THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, LICENSING, AND REGULATION;

AND

(5) THE STATE HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION.

(D) THE OFFICE SHALL DEVELOP STATE CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS THAT IDENTIFY BEST PRACTICES FOR PROVIDING EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE.

(E) EACH PARTICIPATING AGENCY SHALL:

(1) CREATE A CUSTOMER SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN;

(2) REVIEW AND INCORPORATE THE OFFICE'S STATE CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS IN THE AGENCY'S CUSTOMER SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN;

(3) DEVELOP AND CONDUCT CUSTOMER SERVICE TRAINING FOR EACH EMPLOYEE WHO INTERACTS WITH BUSINESSES AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON A ~~WEEKLY~~ REGULAR BASIS;

(4) ADOPT AND DISTRIBUTE A STANDARD CUSTOMER SERVICE SATISFACTION SURVEY FOR EACH PERSON THE AGENCY SERVES;

(5) ESTABLISH AN INCENTIVE OR RECOGNITION PROGRAM FOR EMPLOYEES WHO PROVIDE EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE; AND

(6) REPORT EACH YEAR ON:

(I) THE TRAINING PROVIDED TO EMPLOYEES, INCLUDING:

- 1. THE NUMBER OF TRAININGS;**
- 2. THE FREQUENCY OF TRAININGS; AND**
- 3. THE SPECIFIC SUBJECT OF EACH TRAINING;**

(II) THE RESPONSES RECEIVED FROM CUSTOMER SERVICE SATISFACTION SURVEYS DISTRIBUTED UNDER ITEM (4) OF THIS SUBSECTION;

(III) THE PROGRESS OF THE AGENCY'S CUSTOMER SERVICE, INCLUDING THE METRICS THE AGENCY USES TO ASSESS THE CUSTOMER SERVICE OF THE AGENCY; AND

(IV) THE AGENCY'S MEASURABLE GOALS FOR CONTINUING TO IMPROVE CUSTOMER SERVICE FOR THE UPCOMING YEAR.

(F) EACH YEAR THE OFFICE SHALL EVALUATE THE STATE CUSTOMER SERVICE AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS TRAINING PROGRAM AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE PROGRAM.

[14-204.] 14-205.

(a) (1) Each year, the Office shall submit a report to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, the standing committees of the General Assembly having jurisdiction over economic development matters.

(2) The report shall contain:

(i) information regarding the performance of the Office, including data indicating the effectiveness of programs and procedures regarding permitting;

(ii) data specifying the number of businesses and individuals that have contacted the Office or used the services of the Office; and

(iii) recommendations regarding improvements to existing laws relating to economic development.

(3) THE REPORT SHALL INCLUDE INFORMATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS DEVELOPED FOR THE STATE CUSTOMER SERVICE AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS TRAINING PROGRAM UNDER § 14-204 OF THIS SUBTITLE.

(b) In fiscal year 2016 and in each fiscal year thereafter, the Governor shall include funds in the State budget to implement this subtitle, including funds to:

- (1) employ a full-time ombudsman; and
- (2) operate and maintain an office.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2015.

Approved by the Governor, May 12, 2015.