

GBC_FAV_SB499

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TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL 499 -- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS - DATA COLLECTION AND TRACKING - MINORITY BUSINESS ENTERPRISES

February 14, 2020

**DONALD C. FRY
PRESIDENT & CEO
GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE**

Senate Bill 499 would require the Department of Commerce to include information related to minority business enterprises (MBEs) in its annual consolidated report on economic development programs. Specifically, Senate Bill 499 would require the Department of Commerce to report the number of MBEs that received assistance from each economic development program and the percentage of assistance distributed to each MBE from each program compared to the total assistance distributed from each program. The information required to be reported by Senate Bill 499 is in addition to other information required in statutorily mandated reports that the Department of Commerce submits annually to the Governor and Maryland General Assembly.

The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) supports Senate Bill 499 as an important reporting tool to assess the allocation of state resources. It is vital that State incentives, as tools to create jobs and grow economic activity, are equitable and inclusive. Without consistent reporting on the number and percentage of economic incentive dollars going to MBEs, it is unclear whether the State is distributing those dollars in a manner that benefits women- and minority-owned businesses as defined by state MBE statutes and regulations.

The GBC is dedicated to evolving the business culture by developing and fostering relationships between majority, minority, and women-owned businesses through the Bridging the Gap initiative. In addition to promoting a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion in all organizations, the Bridging the Gap initiative provides targeted support and programming to help women and minority-owned businesses succeed and grow. Senate Bill 499 is consistent with the goals of the Bridging the Gap initiative.

This bill is also consistent with one of the key tenets in *Gaining the Competitive Edge: Keys to Economic Growth and Job Creation in Maryland*, a report published by the GBC that identifies eight core pillars for a competitive business environment and job growth:

Strategic and effective investments in business growth. The State must commit to substantive strategic investments, leveraged with capital assets, to nurture business and job growth. Investments should include competitive and effective tax credits, business development incentives, and tactical initiatives to nurture private investments in industry growth.

Finally, the GBC's 2020 *Legislative Priorities* call for inclusive policies and programs that strengthen economic competitiveness and job creation.

For these reasons, the Greater Baltimore Committee urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 499.

The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) is a non-partisan, independent, regional business advocacy organization comprised of hundreds of businesses -- large, medium and small -- educational institutions, nonprofit organizations and foundations located in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard counties as well as Baltimore City. The GBC is a 65-year-old, private-sector membership organization with a rich legacy of working with government to find solutions to problems that negatively affect our competitiveness and viability.

GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

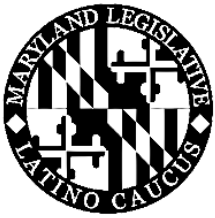
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TO: Senator Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Senator Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair
Finance Committee Members

FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus (MLLC)

RE: SB499 Economic Development Programs - Data Collection and Tracking -
Minority Business Enterprises

The MLLC supports SB499 Economic Development Programs - Data Collection and Tracking - Minority Business Enterprises

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation which improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a voice in the development of public policy affecting the Latino community and the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of SB499.

Anyone who has started a business is familiar with that meaningful experience. For some Latino and other minority entrepreneurs, it is especially significant because it means social and economic mobility by gaining financial independence and improving their family's quality of life. Marginalized populations like people of color and women, are often disadvantaged when starting and executing a business. The legislature has created the proper channels to aid in the economic development of all Marylanders. In order to continue best serving our minority owned businesses, it is imperative to have access to the distribution data of state assistance to these enterprises.

SB499 requires increased reporting from the Maryland Department of Commerce on the quantity of minority business enterprises (MBE) that receive assistance from economic development programs and the percentage of how much aid is distributed to these MBE's. Currently, how much aid MBE's receive through these programs is unknown. With this piece of legislation, the Governor and the General Assembly will have more accurate information to determine if MBE's are receiving adequate assistance. Minority businesses supply and drive our state's economy; thus, we continue to support their work.

The MLLC supports this bill and seeks your favorable report on SB499.