



Wes Moore | Governor
Aruna Miller | Lt. Governor
Kevin A. Anderson | Secretary of Commerce
Signe Pringle | Deputy Secretary of Commerce

DATE: February 16, 2023
BILL NO: House Bill 493
BILL TITLE: Department of Commerce - Office of Climate Change Assistance for Small Businesses – Establishment
COMMITTEE: House Ways and Means
House Economic Matters
POSITION: Statement of Information

House Bill 493 establishes the Office of Climate Change Assistance for Small Businesses in the Department of Commerce (Commerce). The purpose of the Office is to assist small businesses with issues related to climate change, including transitioning to clean energy and developing climate resistance strategies. This assistance would be provided through direct one-on-one assistance in identifying and applying for financial assistance and federal grants, identifying business models and transition plans to advance clean energy, writing new business plans, and complying with federal, state and local regulations.

Commerce provides a range of business assistance to Maryland businesses that goes beyond the financial assistance provided through our programs. However, the level of assistance outlined in this legislation is beyond the expertise and skills of existing staff. Through both the Department's Regional Growth and Retention team as well as the Office of Strategic Industries and Entrepreneurship, Commerce staff meet directly with business across the state to provide direct assistance, connect them with local and state resources, and generally navigate state permitting processes. The purpose and intent of this office is beyond the scope of the level of assistance Commerce currently provides, as existing staff does not have specific expertise in business plan writing, federal regulations and grant programs, nor strategies for assisting small businesses with adapting or preparing for climate change.

Commerce appreciates the sponsor's intent behind this bill and thanks the sponsor for starting this conversation and ensuring small businesses are being considered as the State works to mitigate the impact of climate change. Assisting small businesses through this process will require a coordinated effort of multiple state agencies. Commerce does coordinate with our sister agencies on many topics, and the impact of climate change on small businesses can be a topic for groups such as the Commerce Subcabinet as well as the Regional Resources Teams to include in their work.