



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

DATE: February 28, 2024
BILL NO: Senate Bill 1022
BILL TITLE: Maryland Higher Education Commission - Academic Program Approval and Institutional Mission Statements - Requirements
COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment
POSITION: Support with Amendment

The Maryland Department of Commerce (Commerce) supports Senate Bill 1022 - Maryland Higher Education Commission - Academic Program Approval and Institutional Mission Statements – Requirements with amendment.

Bill Summary:

Senate Bill 1022 alters requirements relating to the State Plan of Higher Education, and alters requirements relating to the Maryland Higher Education Commission’s academic program approval process. It also requires the Departments of Commerce and Labor as well as the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) to have a staff member responsible for collecting certain data relating to workforce needs as well as coordinating with that individual in the other agencies.

Background:

The FY 2024 Budget Bill (Chapter 101, Acts of 2023) included language authorizing the Maryland Program Approval Process Workgroup to make recommendations to improve the academic program approval process of MHEC. The workgroup consisted of legislators, representatives of higher education institutions, and the Acting Secretary of MHEC. They met several times and were briefed on current processes utilized by MHEC as well as national processes and best practices, and ultimately submitted a report with 23 recommendations. This legislation incorporates the workgroup’s recommendations.

Rationale:

Commerce agrees that there needs to be better collaboration between our agency, the Department of Labor, and MHEC as it relates to workforce needs and programs being offered in the State’s higher education institutions. Commerce also agrees that the three agencies need to be utilizing consistent and agreed upon data to assess these needs. Commerce is however requesting an amendment to slightly alter the language regarding the hiring of an individual responsible for these items as it is the Department’s position that we already have multiple individuals on staff that are responsible for certain parts of these requirements. The Department supports officially adding this collaboration to the requirements and responsibilities of the agency, but we request that the language not be tied specifically to personnel and job responsibilities. Commerce looks forward to increasing the partnership between our agency, Labor and MHEC to ensure that Maryland’s higher education institutions are well positioned to be able to train and educate Maryland students in the industries and areas of highest need to support the workforce needs of the State and grow Maryland’s economy.

Commerce respectfully requests a favorable report with amendment on Senate Bill 1022.

AMENDMENTS TO SENATE BILL 1022
(First Reading File Bill)

AMENDMENT NO.1

On page 4, strike lines 19 through 27, inclusively, and substitute:

(19) DEFINE, IDENTIFY, AND COMPILE DATA ON STATE AND REGIONAL WORKFORCE NEEDS, AND WORK COLLABORATIVELY WITH THE MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND THE MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION TO PRODUCE UNIFORM AND CONSISTENT BASELINE DATA, INCLUDING COMMON SOURCES AND MEASUREMENTS, ABOUT WORKFORCE NEEDS TO INFORM STATE POLICIES RELATING TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION.

Explanation: This amendment alters the requirement that Commerce have at least one full-time staff member with specific job responsibilities, and instead requires that the Department be responsible for these requirements.