

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2004 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**

House Bill 179

(Chairman, Economic Matters Committee)  
(By Request – Departmental – Secretary of State)

Economic Matters

Education, Health, and Environmental  
Affairs

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**Secretary of State - Responsibility for the Maryland Sister-State Relationship  
Program**

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This departmental bill transfers lead agency responsibility for the Maryland Sister-State Relationship Program (the program) from the Office of International Trade (OIT) in the Department of Business and Economic Development (DBED) to the Office of the Secretary of State.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** This bill would not materially affect State government operations and could be handled with existing resources.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** The Secretary of State has determined that this bill has minimal or no impact on small business (attached). Legislative Services concurs with this assessment.

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**Analysis**

**Background:** The program was established in 1989. Maryland has sister-state relationships with nine states in Belgium, Brazil, China, France, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Poland, and Russia. The program was run contractually by the World Trade Center

Institute (WTCI) from fiscal 1998 until 2003. Prior to 1998, the day-to-day operations were handled by DBED.

WTCI has indicated that the transfer of lead responsibility of the program to the Secretary of State's office has already occurred and has asked any interested parties to communicate directly with the Secretary of State. DBED indicates that the WTCI stopped work on the program in fiscal 2003 due to reduced funding from the department. WTCI notes that the three organizations involved (WTCI, the Secretary of State, and OIT) have developed a new approach to managing the program. The Office of the Secretary of State will be the first line of communication for all incoming sister-state requests; WTCI will remain involved with the private sector business community in sister-state relationships; and OIT will provide regional perspective through its regional trade representatives in Maryland and abroad. The Secretary of State currently chairs the Governor's Subcabinet for International Affairs.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Secretary of State, Department of Business and Economic Development, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - January 23, 2004  
n/hlb

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