

Chapter 379

(Senate Bill 861)

AN ACT concerning

Economic Development – Western Maryland Economic Future Investment Board and Senator George C. Edwards Fund – Alterations

FOR the purpose of altering the composition of the Western Maryland Economic Future Investment Board; providing that the Executive Director serves as a nonvoting member of the Board, except under a certain circumstance; altering the purpose of the Senator George C. Edwards Fund; ~~extending the fiscal years in which the Governor is required to may include a certain appropriation in the annual budget bill to the Fund;~~ altering the criteria that the Board must consider when awarding certain grant and loan funding from the Fund; and generally relating to the Western Maryland Economic Future Investment Board and the Senator George C. Edwards Fund.

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
Article – Economic Development
Section 13–737, 13–739, and 13–740
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2024 Replacement Volume and 2024 Supplement)

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

Article – Economic Development

13–737.

- (a) There is a Western Maryland Economic Future Investment Board.
- (b) The Board consists of the following members:

[(1) one representative from the Department of Commerce, appointed by the Secretary of Commerce, who shall serve as a nonvoting member;

(2) one representative of an economic development organization in each member county, appointed by each member county's respective commissioners, who shall serve as a nonvoting member;

(3) one representative from District 1, appointed by the Speaker of the House, in consultation with the District 1 delegation to the Maryland General Assembly;

(4) one representative from District 2, appointed by the President of the Senate, in consultation with the District 2 delegation to the Maryland General Assembly;

(5) one county commissioner from each member county;

(6) one representative from District 1, appointed by the President of the Senate, in consultation with the District 1 delegation to the Maryland General Assembly, who shall serve as a nonvoting member;

(7) one representative from District 2, in consultation with the District 2 delegation to the Maryland General Assembly, appointed by the Speaker of the House, who shall serve as a nonvoting member;

(8) the State Senator representing District 1, who shall serve as an ex officio nonvoting member;

(9) the State Senator representing District 2, who shall serve as an ex officio nonvoting member;

(10) a member of the House of Delegates representing a subdistrict in District 1, appointed by the Speaker of the House, who shall serve as an ex officio nonvoting member; and

(11) a member of the House of Delegates representing a subdistrict in District 2, appointed by the Speaker of the House, who shall serve as an ex officio nonvoting member]

(1) ONE REPRESENTATIVE FROM DISTRICT 1, APPOINTED BY THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE DISTRICT 1 DELEGATION TO THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY;

(2) ONE REPRESENTATIVE FROM DISTRICT 1, APPOINTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE DISTRICT 1 DELEGATION TO THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY;

(3) ONE REPRESENTATIVE FROM DISTRICT 2, APPOINTED BY THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE DISTRICT 2 DELEGATION TO THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY;

(4) ONE REPRESENTATIVE FROM DISTRICT 2, APPOINTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE DISTRICT 2 DELEGATION TO THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY; AND

(5) THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AS A NONVOTING MEMBER, EXCEPT THAT THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MAY VOTE TO BREAK A TIE ON ANY ITEM VOTED BY THE BOARD.

(c) The voting members of the Board may elect a chair from among the Board's members.

(d) The Council shall provide staff for the Board.

(e) A member of the Board:

(1) may not receive compensation as a member of the Board; but

(2) is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard State Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.

(f) The voting members of the Board shall have final approval authority on:

(1) disbursements from the Fund; and

(2) projects selected in accordance with § 13–740 of this subtitle.

(G) A MEMBER OF THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY MAY NOT SERVE AS A MEMBER OF THE BOARD.

13–739.

(a) There is a Senator George C. Edwards Fund.

(b) The purpose of the Fund is to provide grant or loan funding to [capital infrastructure projects and business development projects that improve the economic conditions] **CREATE JOBS AND SIGNIFICANT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES** in the region.

(c) The Council shall administer the Fund.

(d) (1) The Fund consists of:

(i) appropriations as provided in the State budget;

(ii) interest or other income earned on the investment of money in the Fund; and

(iii) any other money accepted for the benefit of the Fund.

(2) ~~(H)~~ In each of fiscal years 2024 through ~~[2026]~~ **2031**, the Governor shall include in the annual operating or capital budget bill an appropriation of at least \$10,000,000 to the Fund.

~~(H) IN EACH OF FISCAL YEARS 2027 THROUGH 2031, THE GOVERNOR MAY INCLUDE IN THE ANNUAL OPERATING OR CAPITAL BUDGET BILL AN APPROPRIATION OF AT LEAST \$10,000,000 TO THE FUND.~~

(e) Money in the Fund may be used only to:

(1) award grants and provide loans [to capital infrastructure projects and business development projects to improve the economic conditions in the region] **IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 13–740 OF THIS SUBTITLE**; and

(2) pay the costs necessary to administer the Fund, including paying the salary of the Executive Director.

(f) (1) The Fund is a special, nonlapsing fund that is not subject to reversion under § 7–302 of the State Finance and Procurement Article.

(2) The State Treasurer shall hold the Fund separately, and the Comptroller shall account for the Fund.

(3) The State Treasurer shall invest the money in the Fund in the same manner as other State money may be invested.

(4) Any investment earnings of the Fund shall be credited to the Fund.

13–740.

(a) A member county or local entity within a member county may submit a proposal for funding under this part.

(b) To qualify for funding, a project shall be:

(1) a capital infrastructure project that:

(i) is linked to economic development in the region, as approved by the Board; and

(ii) receives 20% matching funds from the member county where the project is located, another local entity, a private business, or a combination thereof;

(2) a business development project that:

(i) encourages and promotes downtown neighborhood revitalization, small business tourism, or other areas as approved by the Board; and

(ii) receives 10% matching funds from the member county where the project is located, another local entity, a private business, or a combination thereof; or

(3) any other project that the Board determines is appropriate to promote economic development in the region.

(c) (1) (i) The Board shall develop criteria to review, evaluate, and rate project proposals for funding under this part.

(ii) The criteria in subparagraph (i) of this paragraph shall ensure that the project:

1. **EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN ITEM 2 OF THIS SUBPARAGRAPH,** creates or retains **AT LEAST 25** jobs;

2. creates or retains [businesses] **AT LEAST 10 JOBS EACH WITH WAGES THAT ~~MEET OR EXCEED 150% OF THE MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME FOR THE MEMBER COUNTY IN WHICH THE PROJECT IS LOCATED, AS DETERMINED BY THE MOST RECENT AVAILABLE DATA FROM THE STATE~~ EXCEED 120% OF THE STATE MINIMUM WAGE; OR**

3. [increases wages; or

4.] creates [new State or local tax revenue] **SIGNIFICANT POPULATION GROWTH IN THE COUNTY OR MUNICIPALITY IN WHICH THE PROJECT IS LOCATED, AS CERTIFIED IN WRITING TO THE BOARD BY THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS FOR THE MEMBER COUNTY OR THE MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT FOR THE MUNICIPALITY IN WHICH THE PROJECT IS LOCATED.**

(2) (i) The Board shall choose which projects to award grants and loans to based on the criteria developed in accordance with paragraph (1) of this subsection.

(ii) The Board or the Executive Director shall distribute grants and loans to projects based on the decisions made by the Board in accordance with subparagraph (i) of this paragraph.

(d) (1) The Board or the Executive Director shall monitor and track the progress of each project that receives funding under this part.

(2) If the Board determines that sufficient progress is not being made toward achieving the requirements of this section, the Board may reclaim the awarded funds.

(e) The funding provided in this section shall be used to supplement and not supplant any funds that would otherwise be provided to the Board or the member counties.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July 1, 2025.

Approved by the Governor, May 6, 2025.