



Maryland-Kanagawa Sister State Committee

**STATEMENT TO THE SENATE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE,
IN OPPOSITION TO SB 339
(HEARING JANUARY 14, 2021)**

January 10, 2021

Esteemed Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee,

On behalf of the membership of the Maryland-Kanagawa Sister State Committee, I am writing this letter in strong opposition to Senate Bill 339.

Sister States of Maryland must remain in the International Division of Maryland's Office of the Secretary of State because its focus and mission matches with the Division of the Office better than the Department of Commerce. Sister States of Maryland's activities are not limited to business development between our two states but they include educational and cultural exchanges. For example, Maryland-Kanagawa Committee has an exchange program between high schools which the students from Japan visit to Maryland every March and those from Maryland visit to Japan every June. In addition, our Committee has a few programs that bring high school students to study English at UMBC and a few students from UMBC have invaluable opportunity to do internship as assistant teachers for English education at high schools in Kanagawa. Of course, the committee has been making efforts of developing business opportunities for both Maryland biomedical companies and Japanese counterparts. We had organized a few webinars for Kanagawa and Maryland companies in the past as well as a future webinar to introduce Maryland biotech companies to Japanese biotech companies, coordinating with the Department of Commerce.

The International Division of Maryland's Office of the Secretary of State has been the anchor of our activities, in particular, to communicate with the Kanagawa Governor's Office as well as the Embassy of Japan. Secretary of State John Wobensmith and Deputy Secretary Luis Borunda have wide knowledge of our activities and they are valuable people along with the office staff members for us to carry out our mission as the sister state committee. Without their commitment to Sister States of Maryland, the program, which includes around 20 relationships, has to depend on volunteer committee members to handle enormous workload, which would cause delays of communication, reduction of activities and might end up with inactive relationships.

We understand the importance of business development in Maryland, particularly, trading with those in foreign countries, however, relationships should be built among people understanding the other's culture through grassroot activities along with business. The International Division of Maryland's Office of the Secretary of State has the holistic view of relationship between two countries which benefits the Sister States of Maryland activities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tomoko Hoogenboom", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Tomoko Hoogenboom, Ph.D.
Chairperson, Maryland-Kanagawa Sister State Committee



**STATEMENT TO THE SENATE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE,
IN OPPOSITION TO SB 339
(HEARING JANUARY 14, 2021)**

January 8, 2021

Esteemed Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee,

On behalf of the membership of the Maryland-Israel Sister State Committee, I am writing in strong opposition to Senate Bill 339.

Responsibility for maintenance and development of Maryland's sister-state relationships must NOT be transferred from the Secretary of State. The activities of our sister states go well beyond the focus and mission of the Department of Commerce. This past year, for example, our Committee commemorated the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz with a month of events that brought together over a thousand citizens of Maryland along with dignitaries from the Embassies of Albania, Austria, Canada, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Israel, Japan, Serbia, Poland, as well as international NGOs representing Guatemala, Turkey, Russia, China and South Africa. We were also honored to host a multitude of officials from the Governments of the City of Gaithersburg, Montgomery County, the District of Columbia, the Maryland General Assembly, 7 Maryland state agencies, and 5 federal agencies of the United States of America. Programs such as the above-mentioned are valuable relationship-building activities that would be neglected if not eradicated by the Office of International Trade.

Conversely, the Department of State is to be credited for building a robust, diversified and highly successful network and system for conducting Maryland's subnational diplomatic relations – all while working with the minimal budget appropriated to them. Secretary of State John Wobensmith and Deputy Secretary Luis Borunda are international statesmen of the highest caliber. Without the gravitas, acumen and commitment of these two respected leaders, our two dozen sister state committees would be loath to shoulder the enormous workload we necessarily undertake as volunteers to promote the good name of Maryland around the globe.

In our work, we do see tremendous opportunities for Maryland's international business development, but the proper manner to exploit them is to foster cooperation between Commerce and State, not to steal from State to give to Commerce. Allow our non-commercial programs to continue through State, and we can simultaneously generate leads for Commerce. We should have all hands on deck to create business for Maryland, not just Commerce. There is great further potential for our programs to benefit Maryland trade provided that the legislature resists removing the Golden Goose from its rightful nest.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "H. Randall Morgan, Jr." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

H. Randall Morgan, Jr.
Chairman, Maryland-Israel Sister State Committee



SisterStates

M A R Y L A N D

Statement to the Maryland Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Regarding Opposition of MD-Anhui Sister State Committee to SB 339 (Hearing on January 14, 2021)

January 10, 2021

Dear Members of the Maryland Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

On behalf of the leadership and membership of the Maryland-Anhui Sister State Committee, I am writing in opposition to Maryland Senate Bill 399, and urge you to reject this legislation, which would move responsibility for Sister States of Maryland, Inc., and our Committee from the Office of the Maryland Secretary of State to the Maryland Department of Commerce.

For more than 40 years, the Maryland-Anhui Sister State Committee – comprising Maryland citizen-volunteers from throughout the state – has relied on the leadership, support and assistance of the Office of the Maryland Secretary of State and its able staff to help develop and grow the state-to-province relationship into a model many other sister state arrangements here in Maryland and throughout the United States wish to emulate. Why? Because the *sister state relationship has paid dividends for citizens from both sides – not only in terms of enhanced trade and mutually beneficial economic development opportunities, but in terms of valuable exchanges in education and culture as well.*

Such is the significance of the Maryland-Anhui sister state relationship that Governor Larry Hogan and other Maryland officials will join with their counterparts in early February for a virtual, 40th anniversary commemoration.

Responsibility for maintenance and development of Maryland's sister-state relationships should NOT be transferred from the Office of the Secretary of State to the Department of Commerce. The activities of our sister states go well beyond the focus and mission of the Department of Commerce. In 2018, for example, the Maryland-Anhui Sister State Committee welcomed a 125-person delegation from Anhui Province for a weeklong "Maryland-Anhui Promotion Week," which included important exchanges between and among government, education (both K-12 and post-secondary), culture and art, as well as business organizations.

At the same time, the Maryland Office of the Secretary of State – particularly under the leadership of current Secretary of State John Wobensmith and Deputy Secretary of State Luis Borunda, has built a robust, diversified and highly successful network for conducting Maryland's subnational diplomatic relations – which in turn has raised the visibility and enhanced the value of the work of the Maryland-Anhui Sister State Committee and the 20 other sister state committees which comprise Sister States of Maryland, Inc.

The work of the Maryland-Anhui Sister State Committee and of Sister States of Maryland, Inc. can – and has – generated fruitful business and trade opportunities for Maryland. But our work is about so much more than that. And that is why coordination and responsibility for our work should remain with the Office of the Maryland Secretary of State. Please ensure it remains that way and reject SB 339.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Regards,

Steven Drake

Chair

Maryland-Anhui (China) Sister State Committee



MARYLAND SISTER STATES PROGRAM

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January 11, 2021

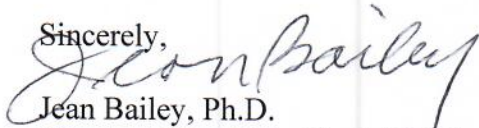
Dear Esteemed Members of the Senate Judicial Proceeding Committee:

I write on behalf of the Sister States of Maryland Program, Inc. (MSSP) in strong opposition to the Senate Bill 339, proposing the decision to move operations and oversight of the organization from the Governor's subcabinet of International Affairs to the subcabinet of Commerce. Since 1980, MSSP, with vital support of the Office of the Secretary of State, has forged long lasting diplomatic, educational, health, cultural as well as business exchanges opening dialogue and leading to Sister State partnerships invested in global strategies of collaboration for Marylanders and their Sister States. The conception and core work of Sister States has been to advance diplomacy, forge international partnerships, and advance networks across sectors. This does not fall solely under the Division of Commerce and to consolidate programming into the Commerce Department would greatly neglect outreach, opportunity, and service of these missions.

I strongly support the continued structure and relationship within the Office of International Affairs. Secretary of State, John Wobensmith and Deputy Secretary Luis Borunda have been instrumental in continuing to build on the legacy of generative programming created with a focus on diplomacy through international bonds which reflect the unique experiences of Sister States programs. While commerce has been one of the advancements of MSSP, it would be a limitation to divert efforts solely to this division. Our work has been both vast and diverse in communities and our accomplishments come from the unwavering support of the Office of the Secretary of State. The value of our volunteer Board of Directors and Committees with varied backgrounds/expertise has been key to attracting and building partnerships with a multitude of institutions, dignitaries, and officials. As Chair of the Maryland/KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Sister State Committee, I have been able to partner and organize numerous mutually beneficial activities, especially in the areas of a) Cultural Exchanges; b) Increasing Educational Opportunities; and c) Improving Health and Human Services.

Through this letter, we aim to draw the severest opposition to SB Senate Bill 339. In our work, we do see tremendous opportunities for Maryland's international business development, but the proper manner to exploit them is to foster cooperation between Commerce and State, not to foster competition between the various departments in the International Division and Commerce. Allow our non-commercial programs to continue through State, and we can simultaneously generate leads for Commerce. We should have all hands-on deck to create business for Maryland, not just Commerce. There is great further potential for our programs to benefit Maryland trade provided that the legislature resists destabilizing that success with this move.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jean Bailey". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Jean Bailey, Ph.D.

Maryland/KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), South Africa Sister State Committee
jeanbaileyphd@gmail.com



Maryland Estonia Exchange Council, Inc.

(MEEC, a non profit NGO)

Member of the Secretary of State's Sister State Program

Associated with the National Guard's State Partnership Program

Using the "principles" of the Council of European Municipalities & Regions (CEMR) as "guidance"

<http://www.marylandestoniaexchangeCouncil.org> 301-332-5640 (After 9:30 AM) mdeso@starpower.com

Thursday, 14 January 2021

STATEMENT TO SENATE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE, IN OPPOSITION TO SB 339 (HEARING 14 JAN 2021):

I, Colonel (Retired) Milton P. Davis, as one of the two members of the Maryland Sister States Board representing the Sister State relationship between Maryland and Estonia plus as the Executive Director of the Maryland Estonia Exchange Council, Inc. (MEEC, a nonprofit NGO), want to state that I strongly disagree with Senate Bill 339 (SB 339 is designed to move the responsibilities of the management of the Sister State Program from Office of the Maryland Secretary of State to the MD Department of Commerce).

I base my feelings and concerns on my education, training, experiences, travel, and previous positions. I have published five academic articles and have three degrees covering most/all parts of the social sciences with emphasis always on European Studies but not all were the normal historical and political studies since some were sociology, a lot of geography and included a MA in economics/finance which means even though one might think of me as a political historian specializing on Europe, I do have an appreciation for commerce and the things that the MD Department of Commerce are involved with.

In addition the army trained me in military intelligence allowing me to become a Foreign Area Officer specializing on Europe (FAOE). I have traveled a lot in 18 European countries (including living for a short time in Britain and 49 years ago marrying an English lady in England. My army career included active, reserve, guard, full time guard as a technician, and over 17 years in AGR status (active-guard-reserve). During this career of over 30 years I was very involved with the beginning of the State Partnership Program (SPP) between the National Guard of states in the US and the Home Guard of countries in Europe especially Estonia-Maryland and to a much lesser extent Latvia-Michigan, Lithuania-Pennsylvania, Poland-Illinois, & Norway-Minnesota (at the end of the Cold War, in the beginning, the project only linked US states and European countries, but now there are links to countries all over the world).

Soon after the program got started, over 20 years ago, General Fretterd, MDNG Adjutant General, asked me to get involved and to try to expand the program to civilian links. We were able to gradually modify the link between the MDNG and the Estonian Defense League/Home Guard (Kaitseliit) to include links between cities, counties, universities, clubs, etc. During this timeframe I looked at other international linkages within Maryland and found that there were some sister cities, sister states, etc. but that there was no state wide coordinating body for the sister cities and a very weak coordinating body for the sister states under the "umbrella" of the Maryland Department of Commerce.

This program was not very satisfactory because the only interest was in linkages that were business related. I was told by one official that they were not interested in a link to Estonia since it was so small; they were only interested in big links like with China, Russia, etc. I am not anti-business, but even though I have a MA in economics, one quickly learns that most successful international links have to have a cultural, historical, social foundation to be successful. Once a linkage is successful, economic and business connections can be added to it, but they should not be the foundation!

Through no action of mine, at this time frame of approximately 15+ years ago the Sister State's Program in Maryland was moved from the Commerce Department to the Secretary of States' Office and immediately started to improve considerably!

I retired from the Army and the MDNG in June 2002 and stayed involved with the project as a state employee for nine more months in the MD Military Department until General Fretterd retired and I became a total civilian in March 2003. At this time, with the "blessing" of the US State Department (including a little financial assistance) the president of the Baltimore Estonian Society, Toivo

Tagamets (who later became president of MEEC), and myself working with some others like the President of Garrett Community College, a professor at Baltimore County Community College, a professor at Salisbury University, the managing director of the Rockville based Joint Baltic American National Committee (JBANC), representatives from some cities (Annapolis, Salisbury, Oakland, Cumberland, etc.) and others from around the state like Southern Maryland, Harford County, Carroll County, and Frostburg State began the forming of a nonprofit NGO which eventually became the Maryland Estonia Exchange Council (MEEC).

Once the Sister State Program was within the office of the MD Secretary of State, I did find assistance especially from a new individual working there, Ms. Mendy Nitsch. The civilian MD-Estonia link was set up in a temporary fashion in 2006 and became an official state link (technically linking the largest and most populated county in Estonia to Maryland) in 2009.

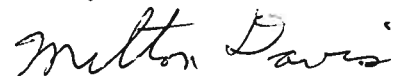
With the great help of the Office of the Secretary of State over several years the link between MD and Estonia has become much stronger allowing some of the individual parts to become very well connected like Bel Air/Narva, Salisbury University/Tartu University, etc. Thanks to the diplomatic skills of Secretary John Wobensmith and Deputy Secretary Luis Borunda in 2019 the official link between MD and Estonia became one of the unique programs in America where a whole country (not just part of the country) is officially linked to a state. Only two other states have something slightly similar to this including the military and civilian links (Illinois-Poland and Minnesota-Norway)!

The Sister State program does NOT need to go back to the MD Department of Commerce, but needs to stay within the Office of the MD Secretary of State. Now to get more financial links between MD and other countries, a closer cooperation needs to be developed between the office of the MD Secretary of State and the MD Department of Commerce with maybe an additional full time employee hired in each office or a "fellowship student" dealing with this issue placed in each office. In addition when the Sister State Committee meets (about three/four times per year), Commerce could have someone in attendance like the Office of the Secretary of State always has someone in attendance!

I know that is hard for a lot of Americans to understand this but there is a lot more to positive international friendliness than just business connections! Maryland is presently doing very well in this area, we do not need to set the whole program backwoods by changing the set up back to the way it once was which did not seem to be very productive!

Questions?

Thank you,



Milton P. Davis
Colonel (Retired) USA
Executive Director