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BILL NO.: SB 479

TITLE: Department of Small, Minority, and Women Business Enterprises - Establishment and Duties

SPONSOR: Senator Sydnor

COMMITTEE: Finance

POSITION: Letter of Information

DATE: March 7, 2023

Baltimore County **offers this Letter of Information regarding** Senate Bill 479 – Department of Small, Minority, and Women Business Enterprises - Establishment and Duties. This legislation would establish the Department of Small, Minority, and Women Business Enterprises.

The Baltimore County Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) program has grown tremendously in recent years. As of FY22, 22% of the County’s discretionary funding was allocated to minority and women-owned businesses. While the County does not have a certification program of its own, it participates in the acceptance of minority and women-owned business (MWB) certifications from both the City of Baltimore and State of Maryland. County staff work tirelessly every day to ensure minority and women-owned businesses receive fair and equitable opportunities to, and while conducting business with the County. The County’s efforts include a range of best practices such as outreach, training and promotion of business opportunities, setting MWB sub-contractor participation goals, providing mobilization assistance, and compliance monitoring. By FY28, the County expects to have 30% of discretionary funding allocated to minority and women-own businesses. The proposed mentor program would greatly assist in our meeting this goal.

The advancement of the minority and women-owned business community strengthens and supports economic vitality throughout the State. The proposed mentor program included within SB479 would enhance the pipeline for minority and women-owned businesses to successfully compete at the prime level.

While we support the goals of this bill, we believe these goals may be advanced by adding staff and resources to the existing Office of SMWBE. For more information, please contact Jenn Aiosa, Director of Government Affairs at jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov.