



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

DATE: March 26, 2024
BILL NO: Senate Bill 896
BILL TITLE: Baltimore Convention and Tourism Redevelopment and Operating Authority Task Force
COMMITTEE: House Appropriations
POSITION: Support

The Maryland Department of Commerce (Commerce) supports Senate Bill 896 - Baltimore Convention and Tourism Redevelopment and Operating Authority Task Force.

Bill Summary:

As amended, Senate Bill 896 establishes the Baltimore Convention and Tourism Redevelopment and Operating Authority Task Force to study and make recommendations regarding the establishment of an entity or strategy to govern and redevelop as well as maintain the Baltimore Convention site and surrounding areas. Commerce would staff the Task Force and the findings and recommendations would be due to the Mayor of Baltimore, the Governor, and the General Assembly by December 1, 2024.

Background:

As noted in the bill’s preamble, the Baltimore Convention Center is vital to attracting business and tourism to the City of Baltimore as well as the State as a whole, but the Convention Center and surrounding area are in dire need of redevelopment and revitalization. Due to the scope of the project and the importance of the site, a thorough evaluation and engagement of stakeholders is necessary to ensure these efforts are successful.

Rationale:

Tourism is one of the State’s top economic drivers, and for that reason Commerce, through the Maryland Office of Tourism, is focused on continuing to promote our great state as a travel destination to visitors both domestically and abroad. In calendar year 2022 Maryland was fortunate to welcome over 43 million visitors to the State, and their spending was over \$19 billion. This generated more than \$2.3 billion in state and local tax revenue, and supported more than 187,000 jobs. Investing in tourism brings a high return to our State, counties, and municipalities.

The Baltimore Convention Center and the area surrounding it should be one of the drivers of tourism activity and spending in Baltimore and the State as a whole, but redevelopment and revitalization are necessary for Baltimore to be successful in attracting major conferences to the City. The Task Force created through Senate Bill 896 will bring together a wide variety of persons that have an interest in the success of Maryland’s tourism/convention industry and the need for a world-class convention asset to attract business/convention travelers. It is time now for the conversation to turn to action and to be bold in recommendations to innovate and turn the state-owned asset into a money maker.

Commerce respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 896.