

# STATE OF MARYLAND

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SECRETARY OF STATE

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## **House Health and Government Operations Committee**

### **House Bill 1206 – Ireland Trade Commission - Establishment** *Favorable with Amendment*

The Office of the Secretary of State is pleased to support House Bill 1206, which establishes the Maryland-Ireland Trade Commission. Economic, cultural, and familial bonds between Maryland and Ireland are long-lived and enduring. By studying and promoting trade between our jurisdictions, the Commission will further strengthen our economic and cultural ties.

There is much opportunity and growth potential in Europe, and specifically in Ireland, for Maryland businesses. Likewise, the Irish business and cultural community has many advantages to seize in Maryland, the gateway to the US market. There are reinforcing ties that should be tightened at this juncture in time that falls in the shadow of Brexit. Opportunity abounds with our Irish partners. The Moore-Miller team supports this subnational outreach.

The Governor's Subcabinet for International Affairs, chaired by the Secretary of State, coordinates the State's international engagement efforts, and meets regularly to advance international initiatives of benefit to the State. This proposal falls within the strategic plan and goals of that body. The Maryland Department of Commerce's Office of International Investment and Trade facilitates businesses to initiate and expand overseas marketing. Their collaboration is paramount for the success of this Commission. The Office of the Secretary of State stands ready to assist with the diplomatic and cultural engagement of the Maryland-Ireland Trade Commission if this legislation is passed into law. This will be Maryland's decade, not only in the United States of America, but across the entire globe. We will do this through governing through partnership and intentionality at home and abroad.

Although our sister state MOU with Cork originated in 2013, Maryland's relationship with Cork dates back much further – including several weeks that Frederick Douglass spent there during the Great Famine. Douglass referenced the experience as metamorphic. Today, Douglass remains an admired leader in Cork; in 2020, for instance, more than 3,000 people signed a petition asking the Cork City Council to name a street or public gathering place in his honor. There, except St. Patrick, he is the [best-known former enslaved person](#) in all history.

The Office of the Secretary of State requests a favorable report on HB 1206, with an amendment to sunset the Commission to ensure fulsome engagement and the passage of this important initiative.