



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

DATE: March 21, 2024
BILL NO: Senate Bill 209
BILL TITLE: Economic Development – Maryland Economic Development Commission – Alterations
COMMITTEE: House Ways and Means
POSITION: Support

The Maryland Department of Commerce (Commerce) supports Senate Bill 209 - Economic Development – Maryland Economic Development Commission – Alterations.

Bill Summary:

Senate Bill 209 specifies that the Governor’s appointees to the Maryland Economic Development Commission (MEDC) shall include one representative of the life sciences industry and one representative of the manufacturing industry. The legislation also alters the current statutory responsibilities of the MEDC to match existing practices including repealing the requirement that the Office of International Trade report to MEDC two times a year and the requirement that the Maryland Tourism Development Board present its strategic plan to MEDC.

Background:

The mission of the MEDC is to establish economic development policy in the State and to oversee Commerce's efforts to support the creation, attraction and retention of businesses and jobs. Founded in 1995, the 25-voting member Commission draws upon the expertise of the State's business leaders to inform State economic development efforts by providing a comprehensive evaluation of the State's business climate and recommending to the Governor the policies, programs and spending priorities needed.

Rationale:

Commerce has several advisory boards and commissions in addition to the MEDC. Included among those are the Life Sciences Advisory Board (LSAB) and the Maryland Manufacturing Advisory Board (MMAB), both of which advise the Secretary on how to best support their respective key industries in the State. Adding a representative from the life sciences and manufacturing industries to the MEDC will improve collaboration and dissemination of information and ideas between these three entities. MEDC can use ideas generated by the industries to carry out its mission of establishing economic development policy in the State and to oversee the Department of Commerce's efforts to support the creation, attraction and retention of businesses and jobs.

Eliminating certain duties of the MEDC, specifically that they incorporate the strategic plan of the Maryland Port Administration developed for the Helen Delich Bentley Port of Baltimore into the economic development strategic plan, and that they seek contributions from the private sector to supplement economic development programs and financial incentives for businesses will

remove antiquated provisions that are no longer in practice. These requirements are being repealed to match the existing practice of the MEDC and allow them additional flexibility in setting the State's economic development strategic plan.

Finally, the requirement that Commerce's Office of International Trade present to the MEDC at least twice a year is the only such requirement of a Commerce unit, and the Department would prefer to have flexibility for the Office to present to the MEDC when there is a need and as requested. The requirement that the Maryland Tourism Development Board (MTDB) present its strategic plan and marketing plan to the MEDC is unnecessary since the MEDC does not have oversight over the MTDB.

Commerce respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 209.