

**HB 1371:** Maryland-Africa and the Caribbean Investment and Development Program - Establishment: Please vote to **OPPOSE** this bill.

Dear Economic Matters Committee:

I am writing to strongly urge you to **OPPOSE HB 1371** during committee consideration or floor votes.

While international trade and economic partnerships can be beneficial in principle, establishing a dedicated, state-funded program focused exclusively on Africa and the Caribbean is needless and fiscally irresponsible. Maryland already has a Department of Commerce with broad authority to promote international trade and investment across all regions of the world—no new permanent program or bureaucracy is needed to target specific continents.

**Creating this program diverts limited state resources away from pressing domestic priorities—education, public safety, infrastructure, health care, workforce development, and tax relief for Maryland families—toward foreign-focused initiatives that primarily benefit private companies or overseas partners. There is no clear evidence that Maryland taxpayers would receive a commensurate return on investment from a state-run program targeting these regions**, especially when federal agencies, private trade associations, and existing state trade missions already cover international outreach.

The bill also politicizes state economic development by singling out specific geographic areas, potentially inviting diplomatic or political complications unrelated to Maryland's core interests. The federal government and private businesses should lead international trade efforts—Maryland should not create new state-level entities and spending commitments.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask you to **vote against HB 1371**.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of my concerns regarding this fiscal responsibility and state priorities issue.

Respectfully,

Trudy Tibbals