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**HB 413– Maryland-Ireland Trade Commission -- Membership and Termination  
-- Altered and Extended**

In the 2024 Session, legislation was submitted to establish the Maryland-Ireland Trade Commission (MITC) within the Maryland State Department of Commerce. The Commission was formed to study and make recommendations about the viability of active trade relationships between Maryland and Ireland.

More than 9% of Maryland’s population is of Irish descent, so the ties that bind Maryland and Ireland are deep and long-lasting. While their histories are intertwined, both Ireland and Maryland are focused on reinventing their economies as they prepare for success in the coming millennium.

The Maryland Trade Commission was formed to build upon shared historic ties to create 21<sup>st</sup> century commercial links that make the most of their individual strengths.

The Commission was formed to comprise the following members:

- The Secretary or the Secretary’s designee,
- The Secretary of State or the Secretary’s designee,
- Two members of the Senate, appointed by the President of the Senate, who have knowledge of organizations that promote Irish affairs, or current or past involvement in organizations that promote Irish affairs, or have an interest in the strength of trade relations between Maryland and Ireland;
- Two members of the House of Delegates, appointed by the Speaker of the House, who have knowledge of organizations that promote Irish affairs, or current or past involvement in organizations that promote Irish affairs, or have an interest in robust trade relations between Maryland and Ireland, and
- And four private sector members, appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate, including:
  - One representative of a public institution of higher education;
  - One representative of the Maryland Chamber of Commerce or its successor organization; and
  - Two representatives of the Irish-American community, who may not be of the same political party.

The Chair and Vice Chair of the Commission were to be elected from among the members of the commission.

Members of the Board:

- Did not receive compensation as members of the board,
- Were entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard state travel regulations, as provided in the state budget.
- Were appointed as members for four-year terms.
- Terms of the appointed members were staggered as required by the terms provided for members as of October 1, 2024

The Commission was charged with studying and making recommendations on the following:

- (1) Advancing bilateral trade and investment between Maryland and Ireland.
- (2) Initiating joint action on policy issues of mutual interest to Maryland and Ireland;
- (3) Promoting business and academic exchanges between Maryland and Ireland
- (4) Encouraging mutual economic support between Maryland and Ireland
- (5) Encouraging mutual investment in the infrastructure of Maryland and Ireland, and
- (6) Other issues as determined by the Commission

On or before December 1, 2025, and each December thereafter the Commission was charged with reporting its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly.

In December of this year, the Commission delivered a summary report of the Commission's activities over the past year *"to gain an understanding of the existing business, educational, and cultural relationships already established with Ireland. (They) then considered where opportunities lie for increasing those existing sectors and expanding into new areas where cooperation and trade may be appropriate"* (From the Letter to the Governor of the MITC Commission).

Further from the Executive Summary of the report:

"Early efforts have centered on identifying priority sectors of mutual economic and academic interest, while building networks with Irish counterparts. Subcommittees were established for each priority sector, supporting research, partnership development, and policy recommendations in their respective areas. Below is a list of the five subcommittees that were established:"

1. Higher Education and Academic Partnerships
2. Cybersecurity, Information Technology, Artificial Intelligence & Related Sectors
3. Pharmaceuticals and Life Sciences
4. Tourism, Cultural Arts
5. Agriculture

“The MITC is now transitioning into an implementation phase. A central goal for early 2026 is the development of an Implementation Plan based on our findings in the first-year report, aligning with legislative reporting requirements and growth targets. The Implementation Plan will create the foundation for a high-impact, sustainable transatlantic collaboration, and priority initiatives including joint innovation accelerators, workforce training partnerships, startup exchange programs, and soft-landing platforms to facilitate market entry.”

The Maryland-Ireland Trade Commission identified its direction for 2026. These next steps inform the content of HB 413.

The bill alters the composition of the MITC, as follows:

- One member of the Senate;
- One member of the House of Delegates,
- And six members appointed by the Governor as follows:
  - One representative of a public institution;
  - One representative of the Chamber of Commerce
  - two representatives of the Irish-American community who are not from the same political party;
  - Two members of the private sector.

The bill further extends the effective date of the Maryland-Ireland Trade Commission from two year ending in September, 2026 to four years, ending in September 2028, with no further action required by the Maryland General Assembly.

To continue the good work of the Maryland-Ireland Trade Commission, we respectfully request a favorable vote for HB 413.