

Maryland Counties Economic Development Partnership (MCEDP)

An Affiliate of the Maryland Association of Counties

Position Statement on HB 0898: *Economic Development - Delivering Economic Competitiveness and Advancing Development Efforts (DECADE) Act of 2026*

POSITION: Letter of Information

TO: House Ways and Means Committee

FROM: Maryland Counties Economic Development Partnership (MCEDP)

DATE: February 18, 2026

The Maryland Counties Economic Development Partnership (MCEDP) is an affiliate of the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) and comprises the economic development directors from all Maryland Counties and Baltimore City. At its meeting on January 30, 2026, MCEDP discussed the proposed DECADE ACT 2026 and voted to support the following position statement. Over the past year, MCEDP has worked closely with the Department of Commerce to recommend reforms, which have been incorporated into the DECADE ACT 2026. Economic development directors appreciate this partnership and remain committed to working collaboratively with state leaders to strengthen Maryland's economic competitiveness and ensure prosperity across all regions of the state.

As the State advances its economic development strategy, MCEDP encourages continued recognition of the importance of industry diversification across Maryland's regions. While targeted investments in key sectors can drive growth, Maryland's counties are not one-size-fits-all economies. Strategies that strengthen one region may not yield the same results in another. A diversified approach, one that recognizes regional strengths, workforce realities, infrastructure capacity, and existing industry clusters, will better position Maryland for long-term, statewide economic resilience.

Local economic development departments serve as the boots-on-the-ground professionals, working directly with businesses and understanding the unique economic dynamics of their communities. County economic development directors value having a seat at the table in shaping and implementing statewide strategies to ensure policies align with local needs and opportunities.

MCEDP appreciates the Maryland Department of Commerce's collaboration with counties and local economic development directors to retain several high-priority incentive programs that are critical to business expansion and workforce development statewide. These programs are widely utilized by local jurisdictions and play a vital role in maintaining Maryland's competitive posture:

- MEDAAF/Advantage Maryland Program (see comments below)
- Job Creation Tax Credit (JCTC)
- Employer Security Clearance Costs Tax Credit

Preserving these programs provides continuity, certainty, and flexibility for both the State and local jurisdictions as we work together to attract, retain, and grow businesses across Maryland.

MCEDP supports the extension and expansion of the following programs:

- **Biotechnology Investment Incentive Tax Credit** – MCEDP supports clarifying program requirements and expanding eligibility to allow for out-of-state investment where appropriate.
- **Research and Development Tax Credit** – We support extending the program beyond its current sunset date to provide stability and predictability for innovation-driven businesses.

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- **Strategic Closing Fund (formerly Sunny Day Program)** – We encourage expanding the program to support not only business attraction but also the retention and expansion of existing Maryland companies seeking to grow within the state.
- **MEDAAF/Advantage Maryland** – We support removing local match requirements and allowing local jurisdictions to provide approval letters from the governing body. These enhancements allow for greater flexibility in local resource allocation and can streamline the approval process, particularly for incentive deals that are highly desirable to both the State and local jurisdiction. Additionally, if the maximum amount offered to businesses is increased from \$5,000,000 to \$7,500,000, the total program allocation should also be increased to ensure funds remain broadly accessible and equitably distributed statewide.

MCEDP supports the DECADE ACT 2026 and appreciates the meaningful collaboration between the Maryland Department of Commerce and local economic development leaders in shaping this legislation.

For more information, please contact:

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