



Wes Moore | Governor
Aruna Miller | Lt. Governor
Harry Coker, Jr. | Secretary of Commerce

DATE: February 24, 2026
BILL NO: House Bill 898
BILL TITLE: Economic Development - Delivering Economic Competitiveness and Advancing Development Efforts (DECADE) Act
COMMITTEE: House Ways and Means
House Economic Matters
POSITION: Support

The Maryland Department of Commerce (Commerce) supports House Bill 898 - Economic Development - Delivering Economic Competitiveness and Advancing Development Efforts (DECADE) Act.

Bill Summary:

House Bill 898 strengthens Maryland’s ability to attract, develop, and grow businesses within the state by removing barriers to investment, supporting proven programs, and aligning economic development tools for maximum impact.

Background:

Maryland’s economic development tools are complicated and in many cases have not kept up with the current needs of businesses. It strengthens Maryland's competitiveness and ability to move at the speed of business by promoting flexibility with our economic development tools, strengthening effectiveness of tax credits across key sectors, and modernizing programs and processes to reflect today's rapidly changing global economy. The goal of this legislation is to sharpen the tools in the State’s economic development toolbox by applying lessons learned from the administration of economic development programs to improve them; ensuring that programs are straightforward and easy to market and utilize; and ensuring that our economic tools are complimentary of one another.

Rationale:

House Bill 898 will revamp several existing programs to allow them to collectively support high potential industry sectors and general business development and attraction. Among these improvements is budget alignment between two of Maryland’s most successful programs to support small, minority and women-owned businesses are the Small, Minority, and Women-Owned Business Account (SMWOBA) and the Maryland Small Business Development Financing Authority (MSBDFA). To ensure sustainable funding streams for MSBDFA without impacting the state budget, the bill will redirect half of revenues collected from video terminal revenues from SMWOBA (which currently receives 1.5% of video lottery terminal revenues) to MSBDFA. The Maryland Economic Development Assistance Authority and Fund (MEDAAF) will be improved to better align with economic development best practices and enable the award of funding amounts that better meet modern needs. Additionally, successful and well utilized programs that are scheduled to terminate in the near future will have their sunset dates extended to ensure they continue to be available to incentivize future business investment.

Maryland's assets - our highly skilled workforce, robust infrastructure, and world-class academic and federal institutions - make the State strategically positioned to support growth and innovation, but the State continues to fall short of its potential. [Maryland's Winning the Decade](#) report provides recommendations toward a 10-year plan that sharpens Commerce's focus on the industries and programs that will generate the best economic returns for Maryland. The roadmap focuses on three strategic priorities and a few key initiatives. Commerce, in partnership with the Maryland Economic Development Commission, developed this plan to provide a roadmap to assembling the necessary collaboration, concerted effort, and resources that will realize the potential of our rich assets and talented people. Economic growth is the long-term structural solution to the challenges Maryland is currently facing. House Bill 898 – the DECADE Act – is ultimately a good government bill that ensures the State's economic development programs are structured in the best way to provide that growth.

Commerce respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 898.