

HB0898_AAEDC Letter of Support_Economic Matters Co

Uploaded by: Amy Gowan

Position: FAV



February 17, 2026

The Honorable Kriselda Valderrama
House Economic Matters Committee
230 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Support for House Bill 0898 - DECADE Act

Chairwoman Valderrama, Vice Chair Charkoudian, and Distinguished Members of the Economic Matters Committee:

The Anne Arundel Economic Development Corporation (AAEDC) requests a FAVORABLE REPORT on House Bill 0898.

AAEDC is a quasi-governmental organization whose mission is to foster diverse economic growth by empowering businesses, expanding employment opportunities, and revitalizing communities. In partnership with the County and the State, AAEDC delivers tools and resources that strengthen the local business climate and expand the tax base across diverse industry sectors.

The 2026 DECADE Act strategically strengthens Maryland's economic development toolkit by modernizing program administration, streamlining incentive delivery, and extending the sunset on critical business attraction and retention tools that are essential to compete for private-sector investment in a highly competitive regional and national marketplace.

Of particular importance to Anne Arundel's workforce and key growth industries is the proposal to extend the life of the **Job Creation Tax Credits (JCTC), Employer Security Clearance Cost Tax Credits and the Research and Development Tax Credit Program**. These incentives are proven tools that directly support job creation, talent attraction, business expansion, and innovation-driven growth.

AAEDC also strongly supports the proposed reforms to the **Maryland Economic Development Assistance Authority and Fund (MEDAAF)**, which align with economic development best practices and will enhance the State's ability to respond to time-sensitive and highly competitive business attraction and expansion opportunities. These enhancements allow for 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.



We further support placing the new **Strategic Closing Fund (formerly Sunny Day Program)** under the purview of Commerce as a flexible funding tool that can be deployed strategically to close high-impact projects that deliver significant economic returns to the State's economy.

Finally, Anne Arundel County has a strong and productive partnership with the **Maryland Economic Development Corporation (MEDCO)** and welcomes the opportunity to work directly with MEDCO to deploy **Build Our Future and RISE** funds. MEDCO brings deep expertise in structuring, financing, and delivering complex economic development and infrastructure projects. Moving these programs to MEDCO leverages its bonding capabilities and project management expertise to scale impact, accelerate implementation, and multiply the economic return on public investments.

For these reasons, AAEDC respectfully urges a **FAVORABLE REPORT** on House Bill 0898 and appreciates the General Assembly's continued commitment to strengthening Maryland's economic competitiveness and local economic development capacity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amy Gowan", written in a cursive style.

Amy Gowan
CEO/President
Anne Arundel Economic Development Corporation

2026 GBCC HB 898 DECADE.pdf

Uploaded by: Ashlie Bagwell

Position: FAV



THE GREATER BETHESDA
CHAMBER of COMMERCE

Better business. Stronger community.

Testimony on behalf of the Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce

In Support of

*House Bill 898—Economic Development—Delivering Economic Competitiveness and
Advancing Development (DECADE) Act*

February 18, 2026

House Ways and Means and Economic Matters Committees

The Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce (GBCC) was founded in 1926. Since then, the organization has grown to more than 650 businesses located throughout the Greater Bethesda area and beyond. On behalf of these members, we appreciate the opportunity to provide written comments on House Bill 898—Economic Development—Delivering Economic Competitiveness and Advancing Development (DECADE) Act.

Senate Bill 388 makes a series of updates to Maryland’s economic development programs. It modernizes existing economic development tools and strengthens state competitiveness through an updated strategic fund. It sustains and extends major job-creation and innovation incentives. All this better aligns state programs with current economic conditions. The Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce consistently supports policy efforts that will improve our business climate and positively impact our growing economy. For this reason, we are proud to lend our support to House Bill 898. Policies that streamline or better align state-level programs can reduce administrative duplication, freeing up resources that can instead support business growth, workforce development and entrepreneurship. In addition, improving the State’s ability to respond to emerging industry needs can help attract new employers and retain existing ones by demonstrating that the workforce ecosystem is adaptable and business-friendly.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable vote on House Bill 898.

MFIC SB388HB898.pdf

Uploaded by: Debbie Dorsey

Position: FAV



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Thea Washington Casting
Timothy Watkins
Renegade Communications

February 19, 2026

Members of the House Ways and Means Committee
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

SUPPORT SB388/HB898

Dear Chair Wilkins and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee,

The Maryland Film Industry Coalition is an alliance of labor and business leaders, educational institutions and individuals who work together to improve the business conditions for the film and television industry in Maryland.

We support the Governor's Decade Act with regards to the Maryland Film Production Activity Tax Credit. SB388/HB898 represents a positive step forward and we support any changes that may help the film industry.

The Film Production Activity Tax Credit Program requires no upfront funding. Credits are issued only after production is complete and dollars have already been spent in Maryland. Independent studies confirm that the program more than pays for itself. According to the 2014 and 2020 Regional Economic Studies Institute (RESI) Economic Impact Study, every dollar claimed in film tax credits returns \$1.03 in combined property, sales, income and other tax revenues, while generating \$3.69 in total economic output for Maryland. From 2011 through 2025, Maryland's film industry generated more than \$1.5 billion in economic impact, hiring over 24,000 Maryland crew and actors and conducted business with approximately 29,000 Maryland businesses.

The MFIC deeply appreciates the committee's longstanding support of the film industry. We respectfully urge you to continue working with us to strengthen and maintain the Maryland Film Production Activity Tax Credit- a program that creates career pathways for our students, supports our skilled workforce of crew and actors and the small businesses that provide the goods and services the industry needs.

Now more than ever, Maryland needs a stable, predictable program to ensure a solid business climate and continued investment by the film business in our state.

Sincerely,

Debbie Dorsey
Chair, Maryland Film Industry Coalition

HB0898_MACC_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Drew Jabin

Position: FAV

House Ways and Means Committee
February 24, 2026

**HB 898 - Economic Development - Delivering Economic Competitiveness and Advancing
Development Efforts (DECADE) Act**

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC), representing Maryland's 16 community colleges, supports **HB 898**. This administration bill reflects a comprehensive and forward-looking approach to strengthening Maryland's economic competitiveness, supporting innovation, and advancing workforce and industry growth across the State.

Maryland's community colleges serve as the primary workforce training and talent development pipeline for many of the industries supported through the DECADE Act. Provisions related to innovation infrastructure, strategic economic development investments, small business financing, and research and development incentives will strengthen Maryland's ability to attract and retain employers while ensuring that residents have access to high-quality training aligned with evolving industry needs. Community colleges partner closely with employers across sectors including cybersecurity, biotechnology, advanced manufacturing, healthcare, and emerging technologies, and the investments and programmatic changes contemplated in this legislation will help sustain and expand those partnerships.

MACC is particularly supportive of provisions that expand support for innovation infrastructure and workforce training spaces through programs such as the Build Our Future Grant Program and Regional Institution Strategic Enterprise Zones. Community colleges frequently collaborate with industry and regional partners to develop specialized training facilities, including cyber ranges, advanced manufacturing labs, and applied research and workforce training centers. These initiatives not only strengthen regional economies but also create clear pathways for Maryland residents into high-demand, family-sustaining careers.

By aligning economic development incentives, infrastructure investments, and innovation strategies, House Bill 898 helps ensure that Maryland remains competitive in attracting and growing key industries while supporting a strong and responsive workforce system. Maryland's community colleges stand ready to continue working in partnership with the Administration, the Department of Commerce, and industry leaders to implement these initiatives and meet the State's workforce and economic development goals. Accordingly, MACC urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report on **HB 898**.

Please contact Brad Phillips (bphillips@mdacc.org) or Drew Jabin (djabin@mdacc.org) with questions.

HB0898_FAV_MTC_Eco. Dev. - Delivering Economic Com

Uploaded by: Drew Vetter

Position: FAV



House Ways and Means Committee
House Economic Matters Committee

February 24, 2026

House Bill 898 – *Economic Development – Delivering Economic Competitiveness and Advancing Development Efforts (DECADE) Act*

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Maryland Tech Council (MTC), with over 800 members, is the State's largest association of technology companies. Our vision is to propel Maryland to be the country's number one innovation economy for life sciences and technology. MTC brings the State's life sciences and technology communities into a united organization that empowers members to achieve their goals through advocacy, networking, and education. On behalf of MTC, we submit this letter of **support** for House Bill 898.

This bill represents a broad-based package of actions to reinvigorate the State's approach to economic development. We applaud the Administration's careful examination of the economic development tools available to the State across numerous agencies. The bill aligns those programs with targeted industry sectors, invests in the most effective programs, shifts oversight responsibility to align with the current operating environment of State government, and moves away from programs that are duplicative, ineffective, or that have outlived their purpose. MTC strongly supports the Administration's proposal to extend the Research and Development (R&D) Tax Credit. MTC has numerous member companies that have benefited from this program, and we believe it is one of the most effective economic development tools available in Maryland. Extending the R&D Tax Credit aligns with the Administration's goals of investing in life sciences as a strategic industry sector. The MTC also supports the efforts to modernize and update the Innovation Incentive Tax Credit (IITC) and the Biotechnology Investment Incentive Tax Credit (BIITC). These programs are also effective tools to incentivize innovation, research, and investment in Maryland.

MTC thanks the Administration for its leadership in economic development, and we request a favorable report.

For more information call:

Andrew G. Vetter
J. Steven Wise
Danna L. Kauffman
Christine K. Krone
410-244-7000

Anne Arundel County _W&M_FAV_HB898.pdf

Uploaded by: Ethan Hunt

Position: FAV



February 24, 2026

House Bill 898
Economic Development - Delivering Economic Competitiveness and
Advancing Development Efforts (DECADE) Act

House Ways and Means Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

Anne Arundel County **SUPPORTS** House Bill 898 - Economic Development - Delivering Economic Competitiveness and Advancing Development Efforts (DECADE) Act. This legislation will strengthen Maryland's ability to compete for private-sector investment, build infrastructure, and expand economic opportunity for our residents. These priorities are central to our economic future and addressing current fiscal constraints.

Expanding the private tax base through strategic economic development is essential to maintaining strong public services while minimizing the burden on residents, and the DECADE Act strengthens the State's economic development toolkit to help local jurisdictions like Anne Arundel County compete in a highly competitive regional and national environment.

Anne Arundel County is focused on connecting residents to meaningful career pathways and supporting the growth of businesses that create long-term economic opportunity. Tools that help attract, retain, and expand employers are essential to advancing workforce development and ensuring our residents can access good-paying jobs close to home.

The DECADE Act modernizes and streamlines the State's economic development programs so Maryland can move quickly and effectively when time-sensitive opportunities arise. Flexibility and coordination between the State and local jurisdictions are key to closing competitive projects that deliver lasting economic returns. It also extends the life of essential tax credit programs that directly support job creation, talent attraction, business expansion, and innovation-driven growth.

Finally, Anne Arundel County values its partnership with the Maryland Economic Development Corporation and supports leveraging MEDCO's financing and project management capabilities to advance catalytic projects. Aligning these tools with an entity that has the capacity to structure and deliver complex development projects will help accelerate implementation and maximize the return on public investment.

I appreciate the General Assembly's continued commitment to strengthening Maryland's economy, supporting workforce development, and creating economic opportunities for communities across our State. For these reasons, I respectfully urge a **FAVORABLE** report on House Bill 898.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Stuart Pittman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Stuart" and last name "Pittman" clearly distinguishable.

Steuart Pittman
County Executive

IATSE487 HB898.pdf

Uploaded by: Gerard Evans

Position: FAV

MID-ATLANTIC STUDIO MECHANICS & BROADCAST TECHNICIANS

I.A.T.S.E. LOCAL 487
2301 RUSSELL STREET
BALTIMORE, MD. 21230
410.732.0414



February 18, 2026

Dear Chair Wilkins and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee,

RE: SB388/HB898

I am Sarah Fales, Secretary-Treasurer of I.A.T.S.E. Local 487, the union behind entertainment in Maryland. On behalf of our members, we are writing to express our strong support of HB898. This legislation is imperative to the survival of our beloved film industry in Maryland and for the future filmmakers currently being trained at our higher education institutions.

Maryland's Film Incentive Program has been significantly constrained by the 10 million dollar per project cap. As surrounding states have recognized the powerful economic impact of film and television production and strengthened their own incentive programs, Maryland has unfortunately fallen behind. By removing the per project cap, we can restore our competitiveness and once again position Maryland as a premier destination for film and television production.

Eliminating the 10 million dollar per project cap would allow us to reclaim our proud 30 year standing in the film industry and bring back productions that generate thousands of jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars in economic impact. According to the Maryland Department of Commerce, from 2011-2025 Film and Television Productions had an economic impact well over 1.5 Billion dollars. This economic boom is felt across the state and throughout different industries such as: textiles, construction, hospitality, transportation and so many more. This is not about Hollywood, it is about the hardworking people of Maryland who built this industry and are committed to seeing it thrive so that future generations can continue the legacy.

I am a graduate of Towson University's Electronic Media and Film program and have been a member of I.A.T.S.E. Local 487 for 20 years. For the last decade, I have witnessed firsthand how Maryland's incentive instability has dramatically diminished the number of productions coming to our state. As Secretary-Treasurer for the past two years, I have heard from countless members who have lost their homes, depleted their savings, and lost their health coverage due to the lack of consistent work. The losses our members have endured are heartbreaking, unacceptable, and frankly unbearable. Creating stability and predictability in the program is crucial in ensuring a solid business climate.

We are hopeful that with the passage of HB898, Maryland can once again attract major productions and allow our members to return to work doing what they love while also contributing to the growing creative economy of our state. We look forward to building a stable future not only for our members, but also for our colleagues in SAG-AFTRA, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, as well as the students who will depend on production work for their livelihood, healthcare, and building retirement security.

HB898 represents stability, opportunity, and a pathway back to a thriving industry that supports thousands of Maryland families. We respectfully urge you to support this critical legislation and stand with the workers who make Maryland's entertainment industry possible.

SAG-AFTRA Letter of Support for SB388_HB898 .pdf

Uploaded by: Gerard Evans

Position: FAV



February 16, 2026

RE: SUPPORT SB388/HB898

On behalf of the more than 2,000 Screen Actors Guild - American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, AFL-CIO members who live in Maryland, I urge you to support the Economic Development - Delivering Economic Competitiveness and Advancing Development Efforts (DECADE) Act (SB388/HB898).

For actors, working on a film or television production as a principal performer, even for a day, results in a nice credit and a good living wage. It also means residual payments for years to come when the film is streamed, distributed in foreign markets, or shown on cable television. Even background work is coveted because it helps our members qualify for their health insurance and pension, thereby reducing the impact on state programs.

A film or television production generates work for thousands of people who live here. That means jobs for local actors, but also for crew members to build the sets, move the gear, and transport the cast. It means hotel rooms, rental cars, catering, and security details. That money has a direct effect on the local Maryland economy.

By making positive changes to the Maryland Film Production Activity Tax Credit, such as lifting the per-project cap, we can encourage new infrastructure investments, create more jobs, foster a successful career path for students, and allow the many talented film industry workers to remain and thrive in Maryland. On behalf of the numerous residents who are part of Maryland's creative economy, the Washington-Mid Atlantic Local of SAG-AFTRA strongly supports this bill and encourages you to vote favorably in support of SB388/HB898.

Respectfully submitted,

Ryan Hastings
Manager, Entertainment Contract and Local Administration
Washington-Mid Atlantic Local, SAG-AFTRA

MDCC_HB 898_Favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Grason Wiggins

Position: FAV



Senate Bill 388

Position: Favorable

Committee: Ways and Means and Economic Matters

Date: February 24, 2026

Founded in 1968, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce (the Chamber) is the leading voice for business in Maryland. We are a statewide coalition of more than 7,000 members and federated partners working to develop and promote strong public policy that ensures sustained economic health and growth for Maryland businesses, employees, and families.

House Bill 898 (HB 898) extends the Build Our Future Grant Program, which provides matching grants of up to \$2 million to increase construction of innovative infrastructure for high-growth sectors, to 2030. Additionally, HB 898 extends the Research and Development Tax Credit to 2031, and the Employer Security Clearance Cost Tax Credit until 2032.

Many of Maryland's businesses utilize the Research and Development Tax Credit and the Employer Security Clearance Cost Tax Credit to expand and create jobs in Maryland. HB 898 is being considered at a time when Maryland is struggling with outmigration and job creation, and we believe HB 898 will extend valuable tools that help mitigate these issues. **For these reasons, the Maryland Chamber respectfully requests a favorable report on SB 388.**

HB 898_DECADE Act_Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Harry Coker

Position: FAV



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.

MEDCO LOS HB 898 DECADE Act.pdf

Uploaded by: J. Thomas Sadowski Jr.

Position: FAV



February 20, 2026

The Honorable Jheanelle K. Wilkins, Chair
Ways & Means Committee
130 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Letter of Support – HB0898 – Delivering Economic Competitiveness and Advancing Development Efforts (DECADE) Act

Dear Chair Wilkins and Members of the Committee:

MEDCO was created 40 years ago by the Maryland Legislature to support the strategic economic development needs and objectives of Maryland. Since then, we have issued nearly \$9 billion in revenue bonds to fund projects. We have built and managed more than student housing facilities—over 10,000 beds housing our best and brightest graduate and undergrad students. We financed and constructed new health laboratories, energy plants, rail spurs, parking garages, SCIF facilities and critical infrastructure supporting our federal facilities and military bases, improvements at our port, and the list goes on.

MEDCO had arguably its best year ever in FY26, with over a billion in revenue bond financing for projects statewide, generating an equity impact over \$520 million across Maryland communities. FY26 also saw MEDCO spend nearly \$50 million engaging Minority enterprises, while our owned real estate portfolio achieved its strongest levels ever, with **ALL** of our student house projects achieving positive financial performance. Our revenues have increased, allowing us to hire new staff and keep up with increased project workflow and asset management responsibilities.

In kind, our work with MDOT and Commerce has grown exponentially, translating into a project pipeline that exceeds **\$11 billion in potential new investment**. Our work with federal agencies has grown, with strategic partnership inked with ARL and NASA Goddard—resulting in at least 3 major projects that will sustain and enhance MD-based research missions and grow significant new high-value job opportunities for Maryland residents.

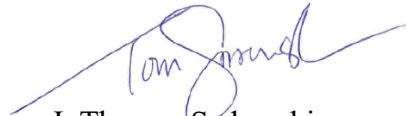
This past FY, MEDCO was entrusted with state funding to launch two new economic development programs: the Business Ready Sites program and the Strategic Infrastructure Revolving loan program. These resources were deployed as intended, at minimal cost, and with a tremendously positive return. Specifically, MEDCO awarded \$3 million in grants returning \$50 million in construction (16:1) and at total build-out the value of new construction is projected at \$1.2 billion (Over 300:1).

All of this, coupled with strong financial management, has made MEDCO a good steward of state resources and a successful, reliable partner. MEDCO is therefore prepared to execute the

recommendations of DECADE Act— assuming critical innovation infrastructure improvement responsibilities managing the Build our Future program and what would serve as a valuable strategic “place-making” initiative in implementation of the RISE Zone program.

At MEDCO we find innovative, financially sustainable solutions to today’s challenges and create transformative opportunities. We look forward to assuming the important work proposed by the DECADE Act and respectfully request a favorable report on HB 898.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Sadowski", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

J. Thomas Sadowski
CEO/Executive Director

HB 898 - DECADE Act of 2026 - GWP - Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Jaime McCarthy

Position: FAV

February 24, 2026

Hon. Jheanelle Wilkins
Ways and Means Committee
Maryland Senate

Re: Support for House Bill 898

Dear Chair Wilkins and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Greater Washington Partnership (the Partnership), I am writing to express our support for the DECADE Act of 2026 (HB 898). This legislation represents a critical step toward modernizing Maryland's economic development toolbox and aligning state investments with the high-growth sectors that will define the region's long-term competitiveness.

The Partnership is a nonprofit alliance of nearly 50 leading corporate, university, and nonprofit employers in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia committed to championing the region's growth and vitality. Our member organizations provide 647,000 direct and supported jobs through their economic activity across the region, and together we leverage our collective resources to identify shared challenges and offer solutions to the region's critical workforce, transportation, and economic development challenges. Our employer community supports investments in programs that promote innovation and thriving entrepreneurship ecosystems to expand broad-based growth in the region.

Maryland faces numerous challenges that could threaten its economic competitiveness and vitality. Over the past five years, the state's real GDP growth has trailed the national average and neighboring states. The state's economic outlook and economic performance rank in the bottom 10 states nationwide and lag its neighbors². At the same time, shifts in the federal workforce and global competition for investment underscore the need for a more focused and modern approach to economic development. But by aligning its economic development tools with high-growth sectors, Maryland can capitalize on its research assets, skilled workforce, and close ties to federal institutions to drive long-term competitiveness.

By strengthening programs such as Build Our Future, Regional Institution Strategic Enterprise (RISE) Zones, the Biotechnology Investment Incentive Tax Credit, and the Research and Development Tax Credit, HB 898 supports industries with strong growth potential, including life sciences, biotechnology, cybersecurity, aerospace, defense, and advanced manufacturing. These investments will help push Maryland's world-class research capacity into commercial activity, new businesses, and quality jobs.

The bill also modernizes business attraction and development tools so the state can compete effectively for major projects and support small and minority-owned businesses. Updates to Advantage Maryland (MEDAAF), the Strategic Closing Fund, and small business financing programs provide greater flexibility and reflect current economic development best practices. These changes will help Maryland retain existing employers while attracting new ones.

Finally, HB 898 recognizes that economic competitiveness depends not only on business incentives but also on workforce participation and talent retention. By addressing industry growth and workforce access, the bill takes a balanced approach to strengthening the state's economy.

At a pivotal moment for Maryland's future, the DECADE Act focuses investments on critical sectors and positions Maryland to compete for the industries of tomorrow. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB 898. Thank you for your consideration and shared commitment to making this region the best place to live, work, and build a business.

Contact:

Emily West

Sr. Vice President, Policy & Initiatives

ewest@greaterwashingtonpartnership.com

ⁱ Maryland Chamber of Commerce: [Maryland's Economic Rankings Are Slipping: Here's Why That Matters and What We Must Do About It](#), 2025.

HB 898_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Kayenda Twesigye

Position: FAV

KATHERINE A. KLAUSMEIER
County Executive



PAM KASEMEYER
Director of Government Affairs

BRAD KRONER
Deputy Director of Government Affairs

KAYENDA TWESIGYE
State Legislative Officer

BILL NO: **HB 898**

TITLE: Economic Development – Delivering Economic Competitiveness and Advancing Development Efforts (DECADE) Act

SPONSOR: Speaker of the House

COMMITTEE: Ways and Means

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: February 24, 2026

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** House Bill 898 – Economic Development – Delivering Economic Competitiveness and Advancing Development Efforts (DEACDE) Act. Baltimore is Maryland’s economic engine and this bill aligns with how our region wins.

Maryland’s long-term competitiveness depends on whether the Baltimore region continues to grow, innovate, and attract major investment. State analyses have recognized the Baltimore region as a key “economic engine” for Maryland, with Baltimore County and Baltimore City among the top contributors to statewide GDP.

Baltimore County sits at the center of that engine:

Global logistics advantage anchored by the Port of Baltimore and the I-95 corridor, which is critical to statewide trade, supply chain resilience, and manufacturing competitiveness. The Port continues to post major performance milestones and remains a statewide economic generator.

Nationally significant industrial capacity at Tradepoint Atlantic, an East Coast logistics and industrial hub with deepwater access, rail, and highway connectivity.

Air access for commerce and talent through BWI Marshall, which drives substantial economic activity and supports a large regional job base.

A diversified base of employers and workers across manufacturing, life sciences, cybersecurity/defense-adjacent industries, and professional services that are positioned to scale if the State has the right competitive tools.

The DECADE Act supports the kinds of investments that match Baltimore County’s assets and Maryland’s growth sectors.

KATHERINE A. KLAUSMEIER
County Executive



PAM KASEMEYER
Director of Government Affairs

BRAD KRONER
Deputy Director of Government Affairs

KAYENDA TWESIGYE
State Legislative Officer

Why Baltimore County supports the DECADE Act:

1) A stronger, faster “closing” tool, paired with accountability, helps Maryland compete for transformational projects.

The bill redesignates and refocuses the State’s deal-closing capacity through the Strategic Closing Fund and reinforces performance-based expectations, including claw back provisions tied to measurable outcomes.

For Baltimore County, this matters because we routinely compete—regionally and nationally—for:

- Advanced manufacturing expansions
- Logistics and distribution investments
- Research and commercialization footprints
- Headquarters and high-value back-office relocations

Those opportunities move quickly. Maryland needs a modern, credible closing tool that is both nimble and disciplined. SB 388’s emphasis on performance requirements and clawbacks is the right balance.

2) “Build Our Future” is exactly the kind of infrastructure program that unlocks private investment and workforce outcomes.

SB 388 extends and strengthens the Build Our Future program and targets innovation infrastructure in a defined set of eligible technology sectors ranging from advanced manufacturing and AI to biotech, cybersecurity, defense, quantum, and robotics.

Equally important: the bill supports real-world, job-producing spaces like wet labs, cyber ranges, prototype manufacturing centers, SCIFs, and specialized training/certification facilities. These are precisely the capital-intensive building blocks that attract employers and accelerate cluster growth.

The program’s strong matching requirements are also a feature, not a bug: they ensure State dollars leverage significant private and institutional capital.

Finally, the bill’s emphasis on prioritizing applicants located in Regional Institution Strategic Enterprise Zones helps ensure the program supports place-based cluster strategies where public investment can catalyze durable ecosystems of employers, suppliers, talent, and entrepreneurs.



3) Continued support for R&D and innovation-driven employers is essential to growing high-wage jobs.

The DECADE Act extends and refines tools that help firms invest in Maryland-based innovation, including the Research and Development Tax Credit, whose stated purpose is to “foster increased research activities and expenditures in Maryland.” The bill also updates timing/approval provisions for the program.

For Baltimore County, these incentives help keep research, prototyping, and commercialization activity here, supporting demand for skilled workers and reinforcing partnerships among employers, training providers, and institutions.

4) Tools that support small businesses, minority- and women-owned businesses, and security-based contracting are highly relevant to our economy.

SB 388 directs a portion of video lottery terminal proceeds to be distributed between the Maryland Small Business Development Financing Fund and the Small, Minority, and Women–Owned Businesses Account. That infusion supports business formation and growth, particularly important in older industrial communities and main-street corridors across Baltimore County.

The bill also extends the Employer Security Clearance Costs Tax Credit window (now before January 1, 2033), supporting firms that compete for security-based contracting and need to invest in clearance processes and secure facilities. This is a real competitiveness issue for firms operating in the broader defense-adjacent economy of central Maryland.

5) Creative economy provisions strengthen statewide visibility and project-based job creation.

The bill allows certain film production entities to amend applications when budgets change significantly and removes a prior cap on aggregate credits for a single production activity. While not the core of Baltimore County’s industrial strategy, these provisions support project-based employment, vendor spending, and tourism/placemaking benefits that matter across the region.

The DECADE Act is aligned with what will keep Maryland competitive: decisive deal-closing capacity, infrastructure that enables innovation, and incentives that reward real investment and job creation, backed by transparency and accountability.

Because the Baltimore region is a primary driver of Maryland’s economy, tools that accelerate growth here generate benefits statewide through supply chains, tax revenues, workforce opportunities, and long-term competitiveness.

KATHERINE A. KLAUSMEIER
County Executive



PAM KASEMEYER
Director of Government Affairs

BRAD KRONER
Deputy Director of Government Affairs

KAYENDA TWESIGYE
State Legislative Officer

Accordingly, Baltimore County urges a **FAVORABLE** report on House Bill 898 from the House Ways and Means Committee. For more information, please contact Kayenda Twesigye, State Legislative Officer of Government Affairs at ktwesigye@baltimorecountymd.gov.

CE Ball 2026 - HB898 Decade Act.pdf

Uploaded by: Luke Verdi

Position: FAV



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

3430 Courthouse Drive ■ Ellicott City, Maryland 21043 ■ 410-313-2013 Voice/Relay

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive
cball@howardcountymd.gov

www.howardcountymd.gov
FAX 410-313-3051

February 13, 2026

Delegate Jheanelle K. Wilkins, Chair
Ways and Means Committee
130 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT of House Bill HB898: Economic Development - Delivering Economic Competitiveness and Advancing Development Efforts (DECADE) Act of 2026**

Dear Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and Members of the Committee:

Maryland's long-term economic success depends on our ability to compete nationally and globally for business investment, talent, and innovation. The DECADE Act provides a strategic, forward-looking framework to strengthen that competitiveness by modernizing economic development tools and better aligning state and local efforts.

For counties across Maryland, particularly diversified economies like Howard County, this legislation enhances our ability to attract corporate expansions and relocations, invest in innovation-driven infrastructure, support workforce training, and advance public-private partnerships that create high-wage jobs. These tools are essential to sustaining momentum in a rapidly changing economic landscape.

Howard County's recent successes demonstrate what is possible when local strategy is paired with effective state programs.

We recently welcomed IronCircle, an AI-powered cybersecurity workforce platform, which relocated from Florida to Columbia, Maryland. Drawn by our deep tech talent and innovation ecosystem, IronCircle is bringing more than 200 jobs to Howard County. Its new 12,000-square-foot facility in Downtown Columbia will address critical cybersecurity workforce gaps. IronCircle joins Tenable and other technology leaders as part of our place-based downtown innovation strategy.

Howard County has also seen strong results from international business development efforts. After leading two trade missions to Europe and Canada, we have attracted nine international companies, including Sreehith Consulting from the United Kingdom and TechRyde from Canada, both AI firms that chose Howard County because of our robust technology ecosystem. These partnerships are creating long-term pipelines for innovation, trade, and workforce collaboration that will benefit Maryland for generations.

We are also seeing meaningful progress in our Gateway Innovation District. By strategically packaging local and state incentives, we have built a strong pipeline of companies seeking to expand into the district. Through coordinated engagement with businesses, property owners, and partners, Gateway is emerging as a future platform for innovation and growth. In total, this Innovation District is projected to generate 5,000–8,000 new jobs, 1 million square feet of new commercial and



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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innovation/flex office space, and more than 300,000 square feet of new retail and restaurant development.

The Job Creation Tax Credit has been instrumental in this work, supporting expansions that helped one long-standing food distribution company retain 260 jobs while creating an additional 230 positions.

The DECADE Act builds on these successes by preserving and strengthening critical incentive programs relied upon by local jurisdictions:

- It extends and enhances the Job Creation Tax Credit and Research and Development Tax Credit, providing greater certainty for employers while improving program effectiveness.
- It modernizes key tools to increase flexibility when competing for major investments, strengthens the Build Our Future Grant Program, revitalizes the RISE Zone program, and expands support for cybersecurity and technology firms.
- It also boosts Maryland's creative economy by eliminating the per-production cap on the Film Production Activity Tax Credit.

Maryland is competing in a global environment where states are aggressively investing in advanced industries and aligning economic development with workforce, infrastructure, and quality-of-place strategies. HB898 delivers the vision and tools needed to grow jobs, broaden opportunity, and sustain prosperity over the next decade and beyond.

Howard County's experience shows that when state and local efforts are aligned, companies choose Maryland, jobs are created, and communities thrive. The DECADE Act ensures we can continue that progress.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB898.
Respectfully,

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive

HB898 Economic Development - Delivering Economic C

Uploaded by: Mary Morris

Position: FAV

Testimony
Ways and Means Committee
February 24, 2026

**HB 898 Economic Development - Delivering Economic Competitiveness and
Advancing Development Efforts (DECADE) Act**

FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB), expresses its strong favorable support for the DECADE Act of 2026 (Delivering Economic Competitiveness and Advancing Development Efforts).

As one of Maryland's oldest public institutions and an anchor presence in West Baltimore, UMB is deeply committed to strengthening the economic vitality of both Baltimore City and the State of Maryland. The DECADE Act provides a comprehensive modernization of the state's economic development tools—tools that directly affect our ability to support innovation, foster new business creation, and contribute to equitable growth in the communities we serve.

The Act's proposed reforms to programs such as the RISE Zone initiative, the Build Our Future Program, the Biotechnology Investment Incentive Tax Credit, and the Research & Development Tax Credit represent critical enhancements that will expand Maryland's competitiveness and accelerate innovation across high-growth sectors including biotechnology, life sciences, cybersecurity, and advanced manufacturing. For UMB, these programs play an essential role in supporting start-ups that emerge from our research enterprise, attracting industry partners to the UMB BioPark, and strengthening the ecosystem of companies that rely on our faculty expertise and workforce talent.

The DECADE Act's revitalization of the RISE Zone Program, in particular, will significantly increase UMB's ability to advance place-based economic development in West Baltimore. By extending the certification period to 10 years, broadening eligibility for innovative companies, establishing flexible rental support mechanisms, and creating RISE Zone catchment areas, the legislation empowers UMB to foster sustained development in neighborhoods that need it most. These improvements will help attract new businesses,

grow local start-ups, and drive investment around the BioPark—one of the city's most important engines of job creation.

Additionally, the Act's modernization of capital programs such as the Maryland Economic Development Assistance Authority and Fund (MEDAAF), the Maryland Small Business Development Financing Authority (MSBDF), and the Small, Minority, and Women-Owned Business Account (SMWOBA) strengthens Maryland's commitment to small business growth and equitable access to financing. These tools are especially critical in West Baltimore, where UMB works closely with local entrepreneurs and community-based enterprises that anchor neighborhood stability.

Taken together, the DECADE Act will sharpen Maryland's economic development toolbox in ways that directly enhance our ability to fulfill UMB's anchor-institution mission. It will allow us to accelerate research commercialization, grow Maryland-based start-ups, expand workforce pathways for Baltimore residents, and attract new employers to the state. This legislation aligns squarely with the state's goals of inclusive economic growth and positions Maryland to compete more effectively in a rapidly evolving global economy.

For these reasons, on behalf of the University of Maryland, Baltimore, we respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 898.

Thank you for your consideration. We would be pleased to provide any additional information the Committee may request.

Sincerely,

James L. Hughes
Chief Enterprise and Econ. Development Officer/Senior VP
University of Maryland, Baltimore Office of Research and Development
620 West Lexington Street, 4th Floor
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Phone: 410-706-6723
jhughes@umaryland.edu

Kevin P. Kelly, Esq.
Chief Government Affairs Officer/VP
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Maryland DECADE Act-Favorable (2026).pdf

Uploaded by: Renata Colbert

Position: FAV



MOTION PICTURE ASSOCIATION

Maryland Senate Bill 388 and House Bill 898

February 12, 2026

Dear Senator Ferguson, Representative Pena-Melnyk, and Members of the General Assembly,

The Motion Picture Association¹ serves as the global voice and advocates for the motion picture, television, and streaming industries. We work to protect and advance the creative economy, safeguard content across all platforms, and support innovative distribution models that expand viewing choices for audiences worldwide.

I am writing to express our strong support for the provisions of the DECADE Act (SB 388 / HB 898) that improve Maryland's production incentive program by modernizing administration and increasing flexibility. While the current bills do not extend the program's sunset, we strongly encourage the General Assembly to consider doing so. Extending the sunset would provide long-term certainty for the industry and allow producers and studios to plan multi-year projects with confidence, make sustained investments in Maryland-based infrastructure and workforce development, and more effectively compete with neighboring states that offer predictable, multi-year incentive programs.

We also support removing the current \$10 million cap, which will better position Maryland to attract larger film and television projects and series that generate substantial economic activity, long-term employment, and increased tax revenue across the state.

Maryland's film and television industry has long been a powerful driver of economic development, job creation, and small business growth across the state. Recent productions have demonstrated the economic impact our industry delivers, including a major production Governor Moore highlighted that infused approximately \$9.4 million into Maryland's economy.²

Our member studios support thousands of local jobs, from skilled crew members and technicians to hospitality workers, caterers, transportation providers, and small business owners. They generate substantial tax revenue, promote tourism, and showcase Maryland's diverse communities and landscapes to audiences around the world.

We further appreciate the bill's recognition of the need for flexibility when projects expand during production, including through additional episodes or increased in-state filming. The ability to increase an applicant's initial requested amount is essential to capturing these

¹The MPA's member studios are Netflix Studios, LLC; Paramount Pictures Corporation; Sony Pictures Entertainment Inc.; Universal City Studios LLC; Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures; Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc., and Amazon Studios LLC.

² Gov. Wes Moore on Monday touted the expected \$9.4 million economic impact of the film *They Fight*, which wrapped filming in Maryland, reported by *The Baltimore Sun*.

opportunities. However, we respectfully recommend that applicants not be required to wait until the conclusion of production and an auditor's review to seek such adjustments, as this creates significant financial risk if program funds become oversubscribed. We encourage allowing applicants to apply for updated estimated amounts as soon as they are prepared to revise their claims during the production process.

In addition, while not expressly addressed in the bill, we encourage consideration of increasing the current \$500,000 per-position cap included in "total direct costs," for example, to \$1 million per position, to reflect the realities of modern production budgets. We also recommend granting the Maryland Film Office and the Authority reasonable discretion to adjust this cap for qualifying projects in accordance with criteria established by regulation. This flexibility would further enhance Maryland's competitiveness, particularly in coordination with the removal of per-episode limitations.

Maryland has earned a well-deserved reputation as a film-friendly state through thoughtful policy, strong partnerships, and sustained investment in its creative workforce. By strengthening and preserving the state's commitment to this industry through the DECADE Act, the General Assembly can build on this success, attract new projects, and reinforce Maryland's position as a leader in the creative economy.

Continued support for the film and television industry sends a clear message that Maryland welcomes production investment, job creation, and sustainable economic growth.

Thank you for your leadership and continued dedication to policies that strengthen our economy and support working families. I respectfully urge you to support the film and television provisions of the DECADE Act and consider the enhancements outlined above.

Sincerely,

Renata Colbert

Renata Colbert

Director, State Government Affairs, Motion Picture Association

Email: renata_colbert@motionpictures.org

Phone: (202) 368-7044

Testimony in support of HB0898 - DECADE Act.pdf

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

HB0898_RichardKaplowitz_FAV
02/24/2026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz
Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON HB#0898- POSITION: FAVORABLE

Economic Development - Delivering Economic Competitiveness and Advancing Development Efforts (DECADE) Act

TO: Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and members of the Ways and Means Committee
FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#0898, **Economic Development - Delivering Economic Competitiveness and Advancing Development Efforts (DECADE) Act**

Maryland needs flexibility, in this uncertain economic environment, to adjust its programs and processes to meet the moment effectively and efficiently.

This bill will meet that challenge by altering the designation, administration, and purposes of and eligibility for certain economic development programs; redesignating the Economic Development Opportunities Program Account to be the Strategic Closing Fund within the Department of Commerce; altering the purposes for and methods by which the Fund may be utilized; altering the termination date of the Build Our Future Grant Pilot Program, Job Creation Tax Credit, Research and Development Tax Credit, and Employer Security Clearance Costs Tax Credit; etc.

The Department of Commerce and the Governor are requesting these vital tools be made available to assist in performance of positive economic steps for Maryland.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB#0898.

Bon AppeSweet Statement of Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Thereasa Black

Position: FAV

RECEIVED FROM SMALL, MINORITY, AND WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESSES ACCOUNT

- \$375,000 in funding
- \$200,000 line of credit
- Invaluable support

SALES SINCE INVESTMENT

- \$1,103,678

ABOUT US

Original date-sweetened chocolate company. We produce chocolate using

- Zero Added Sugar, Zero sugar alcohol
- Only 3-5 ingredients
- Organic, Non-GMO, ethically-sourced
- ZERO:
 - Dairy
 - chemicals
 - lab-grown ingredients
 - preservatives
 - Gluten
 - Soy

-Sold in Walmart, Whole Foods, Mom's Organic, etc.)

-Black, woman, & Veteran-owned

Thereasa Black esq.
CEO/ Founder Bon AppéSweet
LCDR US Navy Reserves
25805 Point Lookout Road
Leonardtown, Maryland 20650
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February 17, 2026
The Honorable Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins
3 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Delegate Wilkins and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

I am submitting this testimony in strong support of House Bill 898. The Small, Minority, and Women-Owned Businesses Account (SMWOBA) is a program essential to ensuring that business owners who qualify for funds have an equal opportunity to succeed as their counterparts. It is well documented that Black-owned businesses in the United States received less than .5% of venture funding, and women receive less than 3% of venture funding. These numbers persist even though women-owned businesses are more likely to generate more revenue per dollar invested than male-owned businesses.

According to studies, Black-owned businesses are more likely to fail primarily because they have less access to funding sources. As a result, they struggle to survive when faced with obstacles such as extremely high tariffs that significantly increase expenses. While well-funded companies have a cushion to cover increased costs, most Black-owned businesses need to raise prices to offset unexpected increases, which can sour their relationship with consumers. Minority-owned businesses are also less likely to have pre-existing relationships that provide access to funding, which, in turn, limits their growth.

SMWOBA changed the trajectory of my business. I had been unable to get funding that would truly impact my business before I learned about it. I have seen many white-owned businesses receive millions of dollars in funding to start and grow. Almost all of them had significantly lower sales than my company, but it didn't matter; they were able to raise money, and I wasn't. The funds SMWOBA has provided to Bon AppéSweet have been vital to our continued growth. Almost all of my funding prior to SMWOBA came from pitch competitions. This means only small amounts of cash at a time making



true growth nearly impossible. We missed out on national grocery store launches because we lacked the funds to support the expansion. All of the professional investors on Shark Tank acknowledged that Bon AppéSweet is a great company with loads of potential, yet not having access to the right doors has left us underfunded and unable to grow as much as we could. Having access to SMWOBA funds allowed us to finance the pre-Shark Tank build-up, grow sales within Whole Foods, and launch in Sam's Club.

Redirecting 0.75% of revenues collected from video lottery terminals will help ensure that SMWOBA remains funded and isn't dependent upon an annual vote. This way, program managers know there will be funding for applicants, reducing uncertainty. Additionally, this will ensure that more disadvantaged business owners will have access to the funds that they need to start and grow their businesses.

Increasing the amount of available funds will allow businesses to truly expand. Access to larger sums of money allows entrepreneurs to focus on their business and hire the help they need, rather than on how to raise the next round.

Please help Maryland businesses grow, help attract other small businesses to Maryland, and pass House Bill 898. Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,

Theresa Black

HB0898-WM_MACo_SWA.pdf

Uploaded by: Kevin Kinnally

Position: FWA



House Bill 898

*Economic Development - Delivering Economic Competitiveness and
Advancing Development Efforts (DECADE) Act*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
WITH AMENDMENTS

To: Ways and Means and
Economic Matters Committees

Date: February 24, 2026

From: Karrington Anderson & Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS HB 898 WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill continues the State's efforts to modernize Maryland's economic development strategy and strengthen its competitive position in key industries. Counties share the goal of advancing a forward-looking, resilient economy and appreciate the continued collaboration between the Maryland Department of Commerce and local economic development leaders.

As the State advances its economic development strategy, counties urge continued recognition that Maryland's regions are not one-size-fits-all economies. Strategies that strengthen one area may not produce the same results elsewhere, and a diversified approach that reflects regional strengths, workforce realities, infrastructure capacity, and existing industry clusters will better position the State for long-term resilience. While targeted investments in high-growth sectors can drive progress, many counties rely on a broad mix of industries, including manufacturing, agriculture, hospitality, logistics, healthcare, and small businesses. Ensuring that State strategies allow for regional flexibility will help avoid unintentionally narrowing opportunity in communities whose economic strengths may differ from statewide priorities.

HB 898 transfers oversight and administration of a few economic development programs from the Maryland Department of Commerce to the Maryland Economic Development Corporation (MEDCO). While counties have a strong and productive working relationship with MEDCO and value its responsiveness and expertise, the expanded role contemplated under this legislation makes clear, structured coordination even more important.

As MEDCO assumes greater responsibility, counties request amendments to ensure ongoing consultation with counties and local economic development directors so that program implementation, project selection, and funding allocations remain aligned with regional needs and on-the-ground economic realities.

MACo appreciates the Maryland Department of Commerce's collaboration with counties to retain and enhance several high-priority incentive programs that are critical to business expansion and workforce development statewide. HB 898 revamps the Maryland Economic Development Assistance Authority

and Fund (MEDAAF/Advantage Maryland Program) by increasing available funding from \$5 million to \$7.5 million and removing the requirement that local governments must contribute at least 10% of a project amount provided by the State, thereby offering greater local flexibility. The bill also extends the sunset date from 2027 to 2032 for the Job Creation Tax Credit (JCTC) and the Employer Security Clearance Costs Tax Credit.

Preserving and strengthening these programs provides continuity, certainty, and flexibility for both the State and local jurisdictions to attract, retain, and grow businesses across Maryland. HB 898 reflects a continued commitment to strengthening Maryland's economic development framework. With consideration of regional flexibility, local input, and continued collaboration, this bill can better support balanced, statewide growth.

For these reasons, MACo requests a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report for HB 898.

HB0898 - MTC Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Matt Libber

Position: FWA



**MARYLAND
TOURISM
COALITION**

February 20, 2026

Maryland House of Delegates
Kriselda Valderrama, Chair
Economic Matters Committee
230 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Maryland House of Delegates
Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins, Chair
Ways and Means Committee
130 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support with Amendments - HB0898 – DECADE ACT

Chairs Valderrama, Chair Wilkins and Members of the Committees,
My name is Matt Libber, and I serve as Legislative Committee Chair for the Maryland Tourism Coalition (MTC). The Maryland Tourism Coalition is a statewide trade organization representing businesses and organizations across all sectors of Maryland’s tourism economy — including destination marketing organizations, hotels, attractions, restaurants, cultural institutions, transportation providers, and outdoor recreation entities. Our mission is to support and strengthen Maryland’s tourism industry through education, networking, and advocacy.

I am writing to express concern that **House Bill 0898 (The DECADE Act)**, while addressing important economic and development priorities, does not explicitly include tourism within its framework. Given tourism’s role as one of Maryland’s largest and most geographically diverse economic drivers, its omission represents a significant oversight that should be addressed through amendment.

Tourism Is a Core Economic Development Strategy

Tourism is not a peripheral industry — it is economic development.

In 2024, tourism generated **\$21.2 billion in direct visitor spending** in Maryland. The industry supports more than **193,8450 jobs** across the State and produced **\$2.5 billion in State and local tax revenue**, saving every Maryland household an average of **\$1,051 in taxes annually**. Tourism investment consistently demonstrates measurable returns, with every **\$1 spent on tourism marketing generating approximately \$34 in tax revenue** for State and local governments. Few sectors deliver this level of statewide economic impact with such broad distribution of benefits.

Tourism Benefits Every Region — But Needs Vary by County

One of the strengths of Maryland’s tourism economy is its diversity. The needs and assets of each county and region differ significantly:

- Western Maryland depends heavily on outdoor recreation, heritage tourism, and seasonal visitation.



- The Eastern Shore relies on waterfront access, environmental stewardship, and hospitality infrastructure.
- Central Maryland and urban jurisdictions benefit from cultural tourism, sports tourism, and convention-related travel.
- Southern Maryland continues to grow its agritourism, heritage, and sports tourism footprint.

A one-size-fits-all economic development framework risks overlooking the unique tourism-driven economies that sustain rural counties, small towns, and gateway communities.

If HB 0898 is intended to foster long-term economic growth and competitiveness across Maryland, it should explicitly recognize tourism as an eligible and strategic sector — particularly because tourism serves as a primary economic engine in many rural and coastal jurisdictions where other industries may be limited.

The Risk of Exclusion

Without clear inclusion of tourism in the DECADE Act:

- Tourism infrastructure projects may not qualify for funding or prioritization.
- Destination marketing and visitor economy initiatives may be overlooked.
- Rural counties whose primary economic base is tourism may be unintentionally disadvantaged.
- Statewide economic strategies may fail to capture one of Maryland’s most immediate and scalable revenue-generating sectors.

Tourism infrastructure — including visitor centers, cultural attractions, sports facilities, waterfront improvements, and heritage preservation — often requires the type of strategic investment and financing mechanisms contemplated by the DECADE Act. Explicit recognition ensures equitable access and strategic alignment.

A Practical Amendment

The Maryland Tourism Coalition respectfully urges the Committee to amend HB 0898 to:

1. Explicitly include tourism and the visitor economy as eligible sectors within the Act;
2. Recognize tourism infrastructure and destination marketing as valid economic development tools; and
3. Ensure flexibility that accounts for regional economic diversity across Maryland’s counties.



Such amendments would not alter the intent of the bill — they would strengthen it by aligning it with one of Maryland’s most proven economic drivers.

Conclusion

Tourism touches every corner of Maryland — from the mountains of Garrett County to the Chesapeake Bay, from Annapolis to Baltimore, and throughout our rural and urban communities alike. It supports small businesses, generates substantial tax revenue, and provides economic opportunities across diverse regions.

As drafted, HB 0898 overlooks this essential sector. By incorporating tourism explicitly into the DECADE Act, the General Assembly can ensure that the legislation reflects the full breadth of Maryland’s economic landscape and delivers equitable benefits statewide.

Thank you for your consideration. I welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively with the Committee to ensure that tourism remains a central and intentional component of Maryland’s long-term economic strategy.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Matthew B. Libber". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Matthew" and the last name "Libber" clearly legible, and a large "B" in the middle.

Matt Libber
Legislative Chair
Maryland Tourism Coalition
mllibber@mdsoccerplex.org
301-528-1480

MDFB - Support with amendments - HB898 DECADE Act.p

Uploaded by: Tyler Hough

Position: FWA



Maryland Farm Bureau

3358 Davidsonville Road | Davidsonville, MD 21035
410-922-3426 | www.mdfarmbureau.com

February 24, 2026

To: House Ways and Means Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

RE: **Favorable with amendments – HB898 Economic Development - Delivering Economic Competitiveness and Advancing Development Efforts (DECADE) Act**

On behalf of the over 7,000 member families of the Maryland Farm Bureau, I submit favorable with amendments testimony for HB898 Economic Development - Delivering Economic Competitiveness and Advancing Development Efforts (DECADE) Act. This legislation would require the Department of Commerce to assess Maryland's industry sectors for potential employment and economic growth, among other changes to programs and commissions.

Agriculture is the leading commercial industry in Maryland, playing a crucial role in the state's economy, environment, and heritage. With over 12,000 farms covering more than two million acres, the industry generates billions of dollars annually through diverse agricultural products, including poultry, corn, soybeans, dairy, and nursery crops. Maryland's strategic location along the East Coast provides access to major markets, while its rich soil and moderate climate support a wide range of farming activities. The state's agricultural sector also contributes significantly to employment, supporting thousands of jobs in farming, processing, and distribution.

Beyond its economic impact, agriculture in Maryland is essential for food security, environmental conservation, and rural development. The industry benefits from state-supported initiatives such as farmland preservation programs, agritourism, and sustainable farming practices to balance productivity with ecological stewardship. Chesapeake Bay conservation efforts are particularly crucial, as Maryland farmers implement best practices to reduce runoff and protect water quality. As the backbone of the state's rural economy, agriculture continues to adapt through innovation, technology, and policy support, ensuring its sustainability and growth for future generations.

As Maryland moves forward with restructuring its economic development policies and programs, it is essential that agriculture remains a top priority. As the state's number one commercial industry, agriculture not only drives economic growth but also sustains rural communities, protects natural resources, and ensures food security. Investing in agricultural innovation, infrastructure, and workforce development will help farmers remain competitive and resilient in an evolving economy. By incorporating agriculture into new economic initiatives, Maryland can strengthen its agricultural sector while promoting sustainable growth and long-term prosperity for the state.

Tyler Hough
Director of Government Relations

Please reach out to Tyler Hough, though@marylandfb.org, with any questions

MCEDP - DECADE ACT HOUSE 2026.pdf

Uploaded by: Heather Tinelli

Position: INFO

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.

Maryland Counties Economic Development Partnership (MCEDP)

An Affiliate of the Maryland Association of Counties

- **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:

Heather Tinelli, President, Maryland Counties Economic Development Partnership
Phone: 410-604-2100, Email: htinelli@qac.org