



# Governor's Economic Competitiveness Subcabinet

*The mission of the subcabinet is to advise the Governor on, and identify and recommend policies, regulations, strategies, and actions that strengthen Maryland's economic competitiveness and growth on an ongoing basis; review proposed policies and procedures by executive departments and agencies impacting economic development and workforce development; coordinate the implementation of executive directives and legislation that support business and talent development in the state; track the progress of the cross-agency implementation of the Economic Strategic Plan approved by the Maryland Economic Development Commission; track the progress of the cross-agency implementation of the economic goals under the Moore-Miller Administration's Maryland State Plan; and on a biannual basis, develop and publish a consolidated economic competitiveness plan that incorporates strategies and action plans from every executive department and agency represented on the Subcabinet.*

## Members

<b>Agriculture (AG)</b>	<b>Secretary Kevin Atticks (Steve Connelly &amp; Martin Proulx)</b>
<b>Budget and Management (DBM)</b>	<b>Secretary Jake Weissmann (Richard Auxier)</b>
<b>Commerce</b>	<b>Secretary Harry Coker, Chair, (Judy L. Smith)</b>
<b>Education</b>	<b>State Superintendent of Schools Carey Wright (Lisa Sparr &amp; Alex Reese)</b>
<b>Maryland Energy Administration (MEA)</b>	<b>Kelly Speakes-Backman (Jenn Aiosa)</b>
<b>Environment (MDE)</b>	<b>Secretary Serena McIlwain (Scott Goldman)</b>
<b>General Services</b>	<b>Secretary Atif Chaudhry (Daniel Chase)</b>
<b>Department of Social and Economic Mobility (DoSEM)</b>	<b>Secretary Walter Simmons</b>
<b>Higher Education Commission (MHEC)</b>	<b>Secretary Sanjay Rai</b>
<b>Housing &amp; Community Development (DHCD)</b>	<b>Secretary Jake Day (Brad Fallon)</b>
<b>Labor</b>	<b>Secretary Portia Wu (Ashley Sharp)</b>
<b>Maryland Clean Energy Center</b>	<b>Executive Director Katherine Magruder (Mary Sirios &amp; Pamela Powers)</b>
<b>Maryland Economic Development Corporation</b>	<b>Executive Director Tom Sadowski</b>
<b>Maryland Technology Development Corporation</b>	<b>CEO Troy LeMaile-Stovall</b>
<b>Natural Resources (DNR)</b>	<b>Secretary Josh Kurtz (David Goshorn)</b>
<b>Planning (MDP)</b>	<b>Secretary Rebecca Flora (Darius White)</b>
<b>State (SoS)</b>	<b>Secretary Susan Lee (Alexandria Liu &amp; Michael Lore)</b>
<b>Transportation</b>	<b>Secretary Kathryn Thomson (Joe McAndrew &amp; David Zaidan)</b>
<b>University System of Maryland (USM)</b>	<b>Chancellor Dr. Jay Perman (Diane Walters)</b>

**January 26, 2026**  
**Virtual**  
**1:00 – 3:00pm**  
**Minutes**

**Attendance**

Note: Names in parentheses denote designees or alternates for members of the Subcabinet.

Subcabinet:

- Harry Coker, Chair, Commerce
- Kevin Atticks, Agriculture
- Kathryn Thomson (David Zaidan), MDOT
- Rebecca Flora, Planning
- Troy LeMaile-Stovall, TEDCO
- Serena McIlwain, MDE
- Sanjay Rai, MHEC
- Tom Sadowski, MEDCO
- Walter Simmons, DoSEM
- Kelly Speakes-Backman (Jenn Aiosa)
- Jake Weissmann (Richard Auxier), DBM
- Carey Wright (Phil Lasser)
- Portia Wu, Labor

Guests:

- Will Castleberry
- Julia Chadwick
- Alex Choi
- Daniella DiRubba
- Laura Gutierrez
- Jonathan Horowitz
- Karen King-Sheridan
- Mindy Lehman
- Alexandria Liu
- Michael Lore
- Tiffany Majors
- Michelle Masucci
- Bill O'Leary
- Ben Seigel
- Ebony Stocks
- Darius White

Commerce:

- Ricardo Benn
- Afiya Bey
- Cori Duggins
- John Gilstrap
- Mary Hanley

- Mayank Kapur
- Jayson Knott
- Tamar Osterman
- Stephen Rice
- Andrew Sargent
- Sarah Sheppard
- Judy L. Smith

## **I. Meeting Called to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 1:03 p.m. by Secretary Coker following a quorum confirmation.

## **II. December 8, 2025 Meeting Minutes Approval**

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting minutes from December 8, 2025 were approved.

## **III. Action Item Review and Status**

Ms. Afiya Bey reviewed the status of action items from the December 8, 2025 meeting.

## **IV. Discussion – Chair’s Report**

Secretary Coker reported on the following topics:

- The most recent Performance Cabinet meeting included discussion of the following:
  - Organizational Review - Commerce was tasked with assessing the organizational construct of Maryland’s economic development to recommend an organizational structure focused on improving coordination to bolster the state's economic competitiveness.
    - **Action:** Commerce will present a draft plan to assess and develop the Organizational Construct.
  - Proposed Legislation - Commerce was tasked with identifying any additional legislation that could be submitted now and considered during the current legislative session. Commerce is actively pursuing items that fit this category.
  - Executive Order Review - Commerce was tasked with proposing revised language for the Executive Order. Commerce is currently revising the Executive Order to incorporate its suggested amendments and will share with the GECS for input.
    - **Action:** Commerce will follow up to seek Subcabinet input for the EO review.
- Strategic Planning updates included an amendment issued for the Request for Proposals (RFP), which extended the deadline for questions to January 12, 2026, and the due date for proposals to February 4, 2026. The award is anticipated in mid-March.
- A draft version of the FY26 Implementation Plan is being developed. The goal is to have a final draft before the end of March.
- The Loaned Executive Program, a component of the Executive Order that established the GECS, is moving forward. The program is a state program that is being piloted at Commerce. Program documentation to include an MOU is being developed.

- The recent county tours included Washington, Allegany, and Garrett Counties. The discussion about Washington County is scheduled for later in the agenda. Secretary Wu joined the tour in Allegany County and visited the Western Maryland Works training center, a visit that received very positive press coverage at the end of the day.
- We led a successful, inaugural Trade and Investment mission to Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar, marking the first such endeavor since 2011. Supported by the Secretary of State's Office, this reconnaissance aimed to build trust and lay the groundwork for long-term capital partnerships. The initial scoping phase identified priority sectors, assessed market opportunities, and established relationships with governmental, investor, and private-sector stakeholders. The delegation, focused on Maryland Life Sciences, Advanced Manufacturing, Financial, and Infrastructure entities, participated in high-level meetings to explore strategic collaboration opportunities.
  - **Action:** Secretary Coker to keep the Subcabinet apprised of progress regarding the AI University in Qatar.
- Recent pipeline successes encompassed 39 total opportunities, each representing a minimum of 50 new and/or at-risk employment positions. A notable recent achievement involved Samsung Biologics, which is a direct result of the Governor's mission to Asia. Additionally, securing the Sphere for Prince George's County was an effort that demanded considerable, collaborative dedication from the county.

## V. Legislative Priorities

Secretary Coker inquired if the Subcabinet wished to share any legislative priorities for the current session. He shared that a significant focus for the Department of Commerce is the revised DECADE ACT 2.0, which is anticipated to be more successful than its previous iteration due to a more streamlined package.

Secretary Flora discussed the new Rural Caucus, which requires assistance with the connection between housing and community development.

## VI. Discussion – MEC Recommendations and Addressing Regulatory Reform

Secretary Coker opened the discussion by sharing that the Maryland Economic Council's (MEC) 2025 annual report highlighted three key recommendations for Maryland's long-term competitiveness:

1. Significant Regulatory Reform
2. Address High Energy Costs
3. Secure an Anchor AI Tenant

The MEC suggests moving forward with regulatory reform including:

- Establishing a single, unified “front door” portal for all business registration, permitting, and licensing functions.

- Setting enforceable permit decision guarantees to ensure faster, more predictable approvals.
- Implementing an ongoing regulatory review cycle, requiring agencies to evaluate and streamline their regulations every four years.

MEC Chair Will Castleberry highlighted that the state's competitiveness issues, first noted in the 2024 report and repeated in the 2025 MEC report, are driving companies to exclude Maryland from site selection because it is not a "Top 25" state for business climate. He stressed this is not just a tax issue, citing states with complex tax structures (MA, NY, PA) included in the Top 25, and urged the Subcabinet to take immediate, actionable steps to gain a competitive edge.

The key points of the resulting discussion were:

- **Permitting Review Council:** The Permitting Review Council will deliver a comprehensive report of categorized recommendations by the end of June.
- **Phased Implementation:** To avoid over-extension, the members proposed an iterative approach for regulatory process improvement by focusing on immediate wins and 90-day progress updates.
- **"Market Speed" Mandate:** Members endorsed a vision of "moving at market speed," setting a strict 90-day objective for approval cycles to match competitor states.
- **Small Business Impact:** Regulatory inefficiencies disproportionately harm small and mid-sized enterprises, which lack the resources large corporations use to navigate complex systems.
- **Local Consistency:** A major barrier is the delegation of authority to local governments without adequate guidance, causing inconsistent interpretations compared to centralized peer states.
- **Statutory Modernization:** Rather than bypassing existing laws, members noted that statutes must be updated to align with modern industry standards.

**Action:** Commerce will assess feasibility of modifying the corporate tax structure as outlined in the MEC Annual Report Recommendations.

## **VII. Discussion – Washington County: Challenges and Themes**

In support of the state's aim to build a collaborative economic development ecosystem for growth, Mr. Jonathan Horowitz, Director of Community and Economic Development for Washington County joined the meeting to promote collaboration among the Subcabinet in addressing issues. Mr. Horowitz shared an update on economic development issues impacting Washington County and offered recommendations for addressing them.

Recent wins for the county included Hitachi Rail, the first AI Driven Manufacturing Plant in the World and being a top-tier logistics hub in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Mr. Horowitz outlined challenges including the need for infrastructure to catch up to growth:

- Hagerstown Regional Airport (HGR) - HGR is growing and taking on important roles, but it is attempting to scale with 1970s-era constraints. The current Air Traffic Control Tower is deteriorating and its equipment needs to be replaced to ensure air space safety.
  - Governor Moore recently provided \$1.5 million towards this effort; however, an additional 13.5 million is needed.
- Fuel farm replacement - Fuel farm equipment is only half operational and poorly positioned. Beyond its condition, it is now a physical constraint that prevents additional hangars from being built, which directly limits expansion of existing businesses and the attraction of new aviation tenants.
- I-81 Safety and Congestion Are Now a Competitiveness Problem - I-81 is a nationally significant freight corridor and the backbone of regional commerce, but Maryland's segment faces serious safety and congestion issues from heavy truck traffic and dense interchanges.

Executive Director Sadowski proposed that he and Mr. Horowitz follow-up to discuss securing revenue bond financing for infrastructure.

**Action:** Tom Sadowski is tasked with connecting with Jonathan Horowitz to discuss financing options for infrastructure needs at Hagerstown Regional Airport.

## **VIII. Single Sign-on For Businesses**

Ms. Smith shared that the Office of the Comptroller and the Department of Commerce have reached an agreement to collaborate on Single Sign-on for businesses within Maryland. A draft plan and vision are currently under development. Mr. Ben Seigel and Mr. Bill O'Leary from the Comptroller's office affirmed their full commitment to streamlining processes for businesses, emphasizing that other agencies will play a pivotal role. The consensus is that a partnership to enhance the user experience for businesses, strengthen security and compliance, and improve efficiency is essential. The team will engage in close collaboration with DoIT to seek their concurrence and additional resources, as necessary.

## **IX. Discussion – Biannual Report Update**

Ms. Mary Hanley followed-up on the Single Sign-on discussion, utilizing it as an example in the Biannual Plan.

The distinction between the Strategy and the Implementation Plan, as integral components of the Biannual Plan, was established. The Strategy will be a high-level, public-facing document. In contrast, the Implementation Plan will be detailed and intended for GECS members and inter-agency partners, including specific steps and a timeline. Single Sign-On was used as an example to illustrate this difference in detail between the Strategy and the Implementation Plan.

Ms. Smith confirmed that the Single Sign-On initiative will be a collaborative initiative involving the Department of Labor and the Department of Information Technology (DoIT), following clarifying questions from Secretary Wu. Labor, Budget and Management, and DoIT will be the key partners in the effort.

## **X. Good of the Order**

- Executive Director Sadowski informed the group that during the recent MEDA Conference, it was announced that MEDCO is planning to formalize the new Maryland Center for Public Private Partnerships. A white paper detailing this effort will be distributed soon.

## **XI. Summary of Key Decisions and Actions**

Ms. Smith highlighted several follow-up actions resulting from the meeting.

### **Action items for follow-up:**

Action Items for Commerce:

- Share the draft plan to assess and develop Organizational Construct, discussed at the January Performance Cabinet meeting, at an upcoming meeting.
- For the Executive Order (EO) Review initiative discussed at the January Performance Cabinet, provide a document to the Subcabinet for their input (Afiya Bey).
- Commerce will recommend assessing the feasibility of modifying the corporate tax structure as outlined in the MEC Annual Report Recommendations.
- Commerce to keep the Subcabinet apprised of progress regarding the AI University in Qatar.

Action items for the Subcabinet:

- Executive Director Sadowski will connect with Jonathan Horowitz to explore financing options for infrastructure at Hagerstown Regional Airport.
- Secretary Flora will work to establish a task force with members of the Subcabinet to focus on community engagement and messaging related to data centers.

## **XII. Adjournment**

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 3:04 p.m.