

Meeting Minutes



Date: Friday, May 15th, 2026
Time: 11:00am EST
Location: Virtual

Attendees: **Delegate Ken Kerr (Chair)**, Maryland House of Delegates
Erin McNeally (Vice Chair), Senior Business Consultant
Michael Lore, Deputy Secretary of State
Brian Castleberry, Senior Regional Manager, Office of International Investment and Trade, Maryland Department of Commerce
Aisha Booker, Acting Sr. Director for Office of International Trade and Investment, Maryland Department of Commerce
Rebecca Bellinger, Executive Director, Center for Global Business, Smith School at the University of Maryland
Chris Frech, SVP Global Government Affairs, Emergent Bio Solutions
Cassie Folk, Director of Government Relations, Diageo

Absent: **Ricardo Benn**, Deputy Secretary, Maryland Department of Commerce
Senator Johnny Mautz, Maryland State Senate
Laura Merritt, President, Diageo

1. Opening Remarks
 - Delegate Kerr welcomed the group and communicated that the December report was submitted on time to both Governor Moore and Senator Mark Daly.
2. New Legislation on Membership and Sunset
 - Micahel Lore, Brian Castleberry, and Erin McNeally gave a briefing on January 21st to the newly formed Government, Labor, and Elections Committee, of which Delegate Kerr is the Vice Chair.
 - The bill passed both the House and Senate, and goes into effect July 1, 2026.
 - The bill addresses 3 key points:
 - i. Reduces the number of members from the Senate of Maryland from two to one, reduces the number of members from the House of Delegates from two to one, and adds two members from the Private Sector.
 - ii. Requires the Commission submit a report to the Governor each December 1 going forward.
 - iii. Extends the sunset of the Commission for two additional years through September 30, 2028.

3. Introduction of New Attendees

- Senator Johnny Mautz has been appointed from the Senate as a new member of the Commission. Unfortunately he had a scheduling conflict and will be introduced next meeting.
- Aisha Booker, Acting Sr. Director for Office of International Trade and Investment for the Maryland Department of Commerce, took a few minutes to introduce herself and provide a brief overview of her background.

4. New Member Recommendations

- The Governor's Appointments Office will conduct outreach and existing member of the Commission can submit any recommendations by June 25, 2026. A few names that were mentioned:
 - i. Michael Kelly, Vice President of Kelly Benefits Strategies
 - ii. Kevin Havens, Owner of McGarvey's
 - iii. Mary Kane, President of the Maryland Chamber of Commerce

5. Secretary of State's Trip to Ireland

- Secretary of State Susan Lee is leading a delegation to Dublin and Galway June 18-21, 2026.
- Primary focus is government to government meetings.
- Goal is to expand our sister state relationship.
- Building on the momentum of the Irish delegation that visited in March and was led by John Carroll from the Tipperary County Council, as well as the visit from Deputy Micheál Carrigy.
- Looking to brand Maryland as the gateway to the US and Ireland as the gateway to the EU.

6. American Irish State Legislatures Caucus and Ireland Trade Commissioner Summit

- August 26-29, 2026
 - i. Dublin: Leinster House, the Home of the Irish Parliament, Google HQ, Fire Side chat in Dublin City Hall, Texas Christian University Horned Frogs vs North Carolina Tar Heels.
 - ii. Belfast: Titanic Museum, the Peace Walls, and the Northern Ireland Assembly.
 - iii. 250th Anniversary of American Independence Event.
 - iv. Delegate Kerr is not able to attend.

7. National Conference of State Legislatures

- July 27-29, 2026
 - i. Senator Mark Daly will be in attendance.
 - ii. Guinness Brewery will have a booth in the NCSL Exhibit Hall.

8. Trade Delegation to Ireland

- October 17-27, 2026
 - i. Limerick: Futura Innovation Conference.
 - ii. Galway: Platform95.
 - iii. Dublin: Guinness Enterprise Center.
- Brian Castleberry is planning on bringing 5-10 cyber companies to join the delegation.

- i. A few of the companies are looking to use our Global Gateway program.

9. Agricultural Project

- Michael Lore is working on a project with the EU, Ireland and an AAC Farmer.
- It will tie in Carina Roseingrave who is one of Irish dairy farmers featured in the documentary “Irish Farmers: A Love Story”, a featured piece at SXSW.
- The recent EU delegation was impressed with the horse space in Baltimore County.

10. Aer Lingus RFI

- Aisha Booker gave an overview of the RFI that BWI participated in for direct flights to Ireland.
- Pittsburgh is also looking to open direct flights to Ireland.
- Dulles International Airport is looking to change their flights from larger to smaller Airbus planes.

11. Commission Objectives for 2026

- Bi-lateral Trade
 - i. Continue our mission to advance bi-lateral trade between Maryland and Ireland.
- Sporting Events
 - i. Exploring a lacrosse game in Ireland and a hurling match in Annapolis, MD at Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium.
- Restaurant Exchange
- Tech Opportunities
 - i. Continue to leverage opportunities with AWS Fastnet.
- Higher Ed Opportunities
 - i. Dealing with contracting budgets, best opportunity is to leverage bi-lateral exchanges between universities.
 - ii. Aisha Booker recommended looking at the Maryland International Education Consortium.
- Other Ideas

12. Meeting Schedule for 2026

- Erin McNeally will send out a Doodle Poll to gather availability from the Commissioners for our monthly meetings for the remaining

13. Commissioner Comments

14. Adjournment