

Meeting Minutes



Date: Tuesday, September 30th, 2025

Time: 12:00pm EST

Location: Guinness Open Gate Brewery

Attendees: **Delegate Ken Kerr (Chair)**, Maryland House of Delegates
Erin McNeally (Vice Chair), Senior Business Consultant
Michael Lore, Deputy Secretary of State
Ricardo Benn, Deputy Secretary, Maryland Department of Commerce
Brian Castleberry, Senior Regional Manager, Office of International Investment and Trade, 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: **Delegate April Rose**, Maryland House of Delegates

1. Opening Remarks

- Delegate Kerr welcomed the group and provided an overview of his upcoming trip to Ireland:
 1. Attending the Public Health Symposium
 2. Meeting with Eoin Long from EclimAi
 - EclimAi's mission is to revolutionize building energy efficiency with AI-driven climate control, reducing energy waste and supporting global sustainability through smart, scalable solutions.
 3. Meeting with Simon Harris, Government of Ireland's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade

2. Review/Approve Updated By-Laws

- The group took a few minutes to review the updated MITC by-laws inclusive of the following edits from the original version:
 1. Added a note that non-Commission members are non-voting.
 2. Added Arts & Culture to a subcommittee.
 3. Ensured Lighthouse Sectors are incorporated in the subcommittee(s).
 4. Added language on attendance requirements for members and removal for excessive absences.
- A quorum was present and the group voted to approve the by-laws.

3. Review/Approve August Meeting Minutes

- The group took a few minutes to review the meeting minutes from August 27, 2025.
- A quorum was present and the group voted to approve the minutes.

4. Ireland For Maryland Exporters Event Recap & Follow Up Action Items
 - Rebecca Bellinger provided a recap of the event which took place at the Guinness Open Gate Brewery on September 30, 2025 from 8:30-11:30am, directly before the MITC monthly meeting.
 - Speaking agenda included:
 1. Welcome to the event: Rebecca Bellinger
 2. Introduction of the Maryland-Ireland Trade Commission: Delegate Ken Kerr (why it was created, goals, work scope, etc)
 3. Initiatives of the MD Department of Commerce: Brian Castleberry (Why Ireland is important to MD, success stories, relationships in Ireland)
 4. Opportunities in the Irish Market presented by the IDA: Joseph Collum
 5. Opportunities with Platform94: Marie Donnellan
 6. A Maryland Success Story: Cory Bullock, Tenable
 7. Services for MD companies:
 - US Commercial Service: Jose Maciel (market research, etc)
 - MD-DC DEC: Kimberly Brown (DEC programs and funding)
 - University of Maryland: Rebecca Bellinger (consulting, internships, AI programs and funding)
 - 37 registrants, 22 attended; all registrants will be added to mailing lists for future communications.
5. Strategic Engagement & Implementation Plan
 - Ricardo Benn presented to the Commission a Strategic Engagement and Implementation Plan that he composed for the MITC:
 1. Background of the Maryland-Ireland Trade Commission
 - The Maryland-Ireland Trade Commission was established under Maryland law in 2024 to deepen economic, educational, and cultural ties between the State of Maryland and Ireland. The Commission's mandate includes promoting bilateral trade and investment, expanding academic and research collaboration, and fostering innovation ecosystems across shared sectors of strength. Chaired by the Maryland Delegate Ken Kerr, the Commission comprises representatives from academia, business, and public service. Early efforts have centered on identifying priority sectors—cybersecurity, life sciences, financial services, renewable energy, and agritech—and building networks with Irish counterparts.
 2. Current Strategic Priorities
 - The Commission is now transitioning into an implementation phase. A central goal for 2025 is the development of an Implementation Plan and Final Report by December, aligning with legislative reporting requirements and growth targets. Priority initiatives include joint innovation accelerators, workforce training partnerships, startup exchange programs, and soft-landing platforms to facilitate market entry.
 3. Future Engagement with Guinness Enterprise Centre (GEC)

- The Guinness Enterprise Centre (GEC) in Dublin supports over 150 startups with a strong focus on international expansion. Maryland sees strategic alignment with GEC in areas like health tech, medtech, AI, and cybersecurity. Potential actions include:
 1. Establishing a Maryland soft-landing desk at GEC.
 2. Creating a reciprocal expansion program for Irish firms.
 3. Co-hosting transatlantic innovation roundtables.
- 4. Future Engagement with Platform94 (Galway)
 - Platform94 is a key innovation hub in Galway with strengths in medtech, software, and engineering. Potential Maryland engagement could involve:
 1. Bi-directional mentorship and accelerator programs.
 2. University-industry research collaboration.
 3. Joint support initiatives for underrepresented entrepreneurs.
- 5. Implementation Plan Timeline and Next Steps (June–December 2025)
 - June–July: Bilateral consultations with GEC and Platform94; initiate draft MOUs.
 - August: Launch working groups for Life Sciences, Cybersecurity, and Entrepreneurship.
 - September: Organize Maryland-Ireland Innovation Dialogue.
 - October: Conduct site visits or virtual missions to finalize partnership models.
 - November: Draft implementation matrix and finalize report content.
 - December: Deliver Final Implementation Plan and Report to the General Assembly.
- 6. Key Strategic Messages
 - Maryland and Ireland share deep cultural and economic ties —this Commission is the platform to turn those ties into economic outcomes.
 - Partnerships with GEC and Platform94 embed Maryland in Ireland’s startup and innovation landscape.
 - The December 2025 Implementation Plan will create the foundation for a high-impact, sustainable transatlantic collaboration.
- 6. Subcommittee Reports Deadline and Format
 - All subcommittee reports are due by COB on October 31, 2025.
 - A subcommittee report template will be sent out to all Commissioners to use.
 - Erin McNeally will consolidate all subcommittee reports and have a first draft of the full report ready by November 5, 2025.
 - Final draft will be circulated to Manny Welsh, Principal Deputy Chief of Staff to the Governor, as well as The Department of Commerce team, prior to hitting the Governor’s desk.

7. Update on signing of SCALE by Platform94

- Ricardo Benn provided a brief overview on Maryland's partnership with Platform94:
 1. With over 30 years in business, Platform94 helps companies scale internationally and achieve their global goals.
 2. Maryland officially executed a partnership agreement with Platform94 in May of 2025.
 3. Platform94 has already supported the expansion of several Ireland based companies to Maryland including Brightbeam and PRONAV.
 4. Maryland's Global Gateway program will also be utilized to support any businesses expanding into Maryland; the program can help offset the first 6 months of costs related to the expansion.

8. Next Meetings

- The Commission agreed to omit the monthly meeting in October to give all Commissioners enough time to work on their respective subcommittee reports.
- The next monthly meeting will be on November 12, 2025, potentially at The Wren, a new Irish pub in Baltimore that was recently named one of the best restaurants in 2025 by the Irish Times.

9. Commissioner Comments

- Michael Lore will continue tracking President Donald Trump's trade policies including tariffs, whether or not the Supreme Court will support, and any effects on the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- Delegate Kerr emphasized the importance of expanding the MITC's industry partners in 2026.
- Rebecca Bellinger communicated that Technical.ly is writing an article on the MITC.
- Rebecca Bellinger communicated that Washington, DC and World Trade Center Dublin announced a MOU to attract Irish companies to the district.
- Brian Castleberry and Erin McNeally are meeting with Kathie Callahan Brady, President & CEO of FITCI, as part of the Cybersecurity, Information Technology, Artificial Intelligence, Quantum subcommittee.
- Brian Castleberry, Erin McNeally, and Chris Frech are meeting with Jim Kernan, CEO of Pronav, as part of the Pharmaceuticals, Life Sciences, Computational Bio subcommittee.
- Michael Lore is continuing to pursue a License Reciprocity Agreement between Maryland and Ireland.
 1. No other state has a reciprocity agreement; they only have unilateral agreements.
 2. Need to decide if Maryland is willing to sign a unilateral agreement which would set a precedent since all other agreements are reciprocal.
 3. Next step is confirming the requirements in Ireland to obtain a license meet Maryland's requirements.
- Erin McNeally will start to research the double taxation issue between Maryland and Ireland which was communicated by Joe O'murchadha.

10. Adjournment