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HEADLINE: TRADE MISSION BOUND FOR CHINA;
TRIP LED BY BROWN WILL BE ADMINISTRATION'S FIRST MAJOR OVERSEAS JOURNEY

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BODY:

Lt. Gov. Anthony G. Brown will lead a trade mission to China next week, an effort that officials said is designed to spur greater investment in Maryland by Chinese companies.

The expedition is the first major overseas trip by the O'Malley administration. David Tillman, a spokesman for the Department of Business and Economic Development, said it is designed to do more than increase the import and export of goods between Maryland and China.

"This is about creating jobs," Tillman said. "This is an invitation for direct investment where they're getting Chinese-headquartered companies to have operations in Maryland and we're trying to get Maryland corporations a presence in China."

Brown canceled an interview about the trip and was unavailable for comment. His spokeswoman, Samantha Kappalman, said the trip "will strengthen Maryland's relationship to China and further encourage foreign direct investment in our great state."

Maryland has had an economic development office in China for more than a decade -- the oldest of the state's half-dozen overseas offices -- and more than 75 Maryland companies have operations there. Six Chinese companies -- including pharmaceutical and biotech companies in Montgomery County and an orchid greenhouse in Princess Anne -- have operations here.

China also is developing a technology park at the University of Maryland. The Chinese government has loosened restrictions on foreign investment, leading state officials to believe that the time is right to seek closer ties.

Brown will be accompanied by four people from DBED, one member of his staff and a state trooper in the

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lieutenant governor's protection detail. Tillman said the week-long trip is expected to cost about \$85,000.

The group will be splitting its time between Beijing and Shanghai.

Former Lt. Gov. Michael S. Steele went on three trade missions while in office. He attended the Paris Air Show, led a delegation to Barbados and took a 10-day trip to Ghana and South Africa.

Steele's trip to Africa cost the state about \$148,000. His main accomplishment there was to sign an agreement to bring Ghana Air to Baltimore-Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport, a deal that had been in the works since the Glendening administration.

Later, however, the Federal Aviation Administration suspended the airline's operations for safety violations, stranding passengers at BWI.

Nonetheless, business leaders say trade missions can be helpful.

James Brenza, president of Baltimore-based GP Solutions, which makes computerized maintenance management systems, said he decided to make a trip to China next week because the lieutenant governor's presence will open important doors as he works to expand his business there,

GP has been operating in Asia for years and has taken advantage of DBED's services there to make industry contacts, Brenza said. But the company's products are frequently used by power and wastewater treatment plants, and in China, those are largely run by the government. Showing up with Brown brings the company more respect, Brenza said.

"We're a relatively small company," Brenza said. "With the state officials being along, we tend to get a better audience with those kinds of [Chinese] officials."

Maryland Business for Responsive Government President Robert O.C. "Rocky" Worcester said his organization's attitude toward government spending is about as frugal as it gets, but he said trips such as this, if done properly, aren't wastes of money.

"Anything this state does to help the private sector is a good thing," Worcester said.

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