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Terms expire 1997.

ORIGIN & FUNCTIONS

Maryland's commitment to develop economic opportunities began in 1884 with the creation of the Bureau of Statistics and Information of the Industries of the State (Chapter 211, Acts of 1884). To guide development, government needed to know the agricultural, mineral and industrial output of the State, what commerce was moving through Maryland, and whether transportation networks functioned. In 1892, the General Assembly directed the Bureau to collect statistics on labor, particularly wages and strikes; any information about agriculture calculated to attract immigration; and data on mineral products, manufacturing, transportation, shipping, and commerce (Chapter 29, Acts of 1892). The Bureau also was to receive reports from all officers and institutions of the State, publish the information in book form, and annually revise and republish. By 1916, as the Bureau of Industrial Statistics, it reformed to become the State Board of Labor and Statistics. Its information-gathering responsibilities continued even as it reorganized into the Department of Labor and Industry in 1945. Yet, over time, that department's focus shifted toward regulating the conditions of labor.

Department of Information. By 1948, another agency was formed to collect information about the State. Authorized by the Board of Public Works, the Department of Information began as a division of the Hall of Records Commission. In 1949, it became an independent agency (Chapter 665, Acts of 1949). The Department compiled data not only about industry and agriculture, but also natural resources, recreation, government, and history. To encourage a burgeoning tourist and outdoor recreation trade, the Department promoted Maryland and its products with films, photographs, pamphlets, and press releases.

Department of Economic Development. The Department of Information was superseded in 1959 by the Department of Economic Development (Chapter 185, Acts of 1959). Its mandate— to advance the economic welfare of Maryland citizens by developing the State's natural resources, industrial opportunities, and tourism potential— was carried out by three divisions: Business and Industrial Development; Research; and Tourist Development and Publicity. Another forerunner of the current Department, the Development Credit Corporation of Maryland, was created in 1959 to stimulate business and industry by making loans to small businesses when conventional financing was unavailable.

Department of Economic and Community Development. In 1970, the Department of Economic Development was reorganized as the Department of Economic and Community Development (Chapter 527, Acts of 1970). Added to its economic responsibilities now were duties to protect and enhance the social, cultural and fiscal viability of Maryland communities.

Department of Economic and Employment Development. In 1987, the Department of Economic and Employment Development was created (Chapter 311, Acts of 1987). It contained agencies and programs formerly administered by its immediate predecessors, the Department of Economic and Community Development and the Department of Employment and Training.

Department of Business and Economic Development. In 1995, the Department of Economic and Employment Development reorganized as the Department of Business and Economic Development to emphasize its mission of bringing new jobs and new businesses to Maryland (Chapter 120, Acts of 1995). To generate jobs in Maryland, the Department attracts new businesses, encourages the expansion and retention of existing facilities, and provides financial assistance and training. The Department publicizes Maryland's attributes, and markets local products at home and abroad to stimulate economic development, international trade, and tourism. The Department also invests in the arts and promotes sports events.

Departmental objectives are pursued in five main areas: Administration; Financing; Marketing; Regional Development; and Tourism, Film, and the Arts.