

Work, Wages and Wealth!

NEWS FROM THE MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC MOBILITY OCTOBER 2026



From the Secretary



Secretary Walter Simmons speaking to community and business leaders at Wells Fargo Baltimore County Operation Hope Grand Opening

One year ago today, Maryland did something no other state had done. We stood up the first cabinet-level agency in the United States focused on removing structural barriers to upward mobility.

I said at the start that we would engage all 24 jurisdictions and ensure that our work in Annapolis positively impacts economic opportunity throughout Maryland, and we did it! Through Sixty-four meetings across every county and Baltimore City, listening before acting, and ultimately delivering in year one.

Here is what I took away from our first year: The talent is already here. The businesses are already here. The opportunities are already here. **What has been missing is a structured connection between the economic opportunities and the Marylanders who need and are searching for them.**

That is the work. Not a brochure, not a program launch. A connection, made on purpose, in all 24 jurisdictions.

In year two, we are striving to make economic opportunity connections more efficient and impactful, in every region of this State. We are unapologetically rooting for Maryland businesses, Maryland residents, and Maryland communities.

Work, Wages, and Wealth for ALL!

Secretary Walter L. Simmons

[Watch the Secretary's one year video](#)

Year One by the Numbers

DoSEM opened on October 1, 2025, established by House Bill 1253 passed to Section 8 of Chapter 605 (Acts of 2025). Here is where the first year landed.

64

community engagement meetings through Voices of Maryland, covering all 24 Maryland jurisdictions

390+

business support organizations in DoSEM's partner network across the State

Certifications DoSEM Manages

Certified businesses in each program as of October 1, 2026.

STATE PROGRAMS

9000+

Minority Business Enterprise (MBE)

29% statewide participation goal

6800+

Certified Small Business (CSB)

20% Small Business Reserve set-aside

1300+

Veteran-Owned Small Business Enterprise (VSBE)

3% statewide procurement goal

FEDERAL PROGRAMS

Under review

Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)

Goal setting paused until certified firms are reevaluated

Under review

Airport Concession Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (ACDBE)

Goal setting paused until certified firms are reevaluated

10,000+

Small Business Enterprise (SBE)

Not governed by the Final Rule

What's Open Now

[FY2027 Procurement Forecast](#)

Maryland's forecast of upcoming State solicitations is the State's overview of all upcoming procurements. It tells you what agencies intend to buy, by category, before the solicitation posts. If you are certified and you are not reading the forecast, you could be missing out on future opportunity!

[Community Reinvestment and Repair Fund Annual Reporting](#)

Jurisdictions must submit distribution plans and spending reports to the Office of Social Equity. The first deadline is today, October 1, 2026. The Fund is subject to audit by the Office of Legislative Audits under Section 2-1220 of the State Government Article, and we may request additional information at any time. Jurisdiction staff who have not submitted should contact the Office of Social Equity directly.

[Federal Disadvantaged Business Enterprise and ACDBE Reevaluations](#)

Under [USDOT's Final Rule](#), Maryland's DBE and ACDBE reevaluations are still in process.

Program Updates

This is the item most certified firms need this month, so it is worth reading in full.

Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) / Airport Concession Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (ACDBE) Certification

On September 25, 2026, the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) published a [Final Rule](#) (49 CFR Parts 23 and 26, docket DOT-OST-2025-0897) on the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise and Airport Concession Disadvantaged Business Enterprise programs.

DoSEM is reviewing the Final Rule and will provide more information in the coming weeks. To receive updates, sign up for our newsletter at economicmobility.maryland.gov.

Maryland Minority Business Enterprise (MBE)

Federal Small Business Enterprise (SBE)

Neither certification is affected by the pause. Both are being processed normally.

Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) Certification

MBE certification is managed by OMBE in the B2G system at marylandmdbe.mdbecert.com. Official messages from that system come from MarylandMDBE@gob2g.com.

MBE Ombudsman

In FY2026, the Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) Ombudsman Unit successfully recouped over \$1 million for small, women, and minority-owned businesses through dedicated conflict resolution services. In addition to providing tailored, one-on-one support to MBEs and prime contractors, the Unit reviews contracts with MBE and VSBE goals and/or SBR designations submitted to the Board of Public Works for approval to ensure proper procedures have been followed.

Program Updates, continued

Small Business Enterprise (SBE) Certification

Maryland managed Federal SBE certifications are not governed by the Final Rule and are unaffected by the new federal eligibility criteria. For NEW SBE Certifications, we are suggesting business owners DO NOT complete the Uniform Certification Application (UCA) and instead submit individually to ensure that SBE Applications are not delayed due to the combination of DBE and SBE Applications.

Certified Small Business (CSB) Certification

The Small Business Reserve (SBR) Program is expanding by requiring any procurement of \$1,000,000 or less to be awarded to a certified small business when there are certified small businesses that can perform the work. Payment timelines for Small Business Reserve (SBR) contracts will be cut in half, from 30 days to just 15 days after invoice approval, helping small businesses improve their cash flow.

Veteran-Owned Small Business Enterprise (VSBE) Certification

As of September 1, Maryland will begin using updated VSBE forms in solicitations posted on or after September 1, 2026. These forms are fillable, more accessible, and ADA-compliant, creating a better experience for all suppliers. The updated forms are designed to make it easier to provide complete and accurate information. For more information about the changes, including answers to frequently asked questions, please see our Updated MBE and VSBE Forms FAQ document.

Employment Works Program

The Maryland Procurement Reform Act (PRA), HB 500 of 2025, moved the Employment Works Program out of the Department of General Services (DGS) on October 1, 2025. Management now sits with OSBA within DoSEM, aligning the program with the State's other socially and economically focused procurement programs. DoSEM is working with the DGS Office of State Procurement to implement the change. October 1, 2026 marks one year since the program moved under DoSEM.

Social Equity Licensees

The Maryland Cannabis Administration recently published their Notice of Final Action (NOFA) to amend COMAR 14.17.01, .05, .10, .12, .13, .18, and .22. It was printed in the Maryland Register on September 4, 2026. The NOFA includes small clarifications to better reflect the MCA's intent, including to "Allow conditional licensees to request up to two 6-month extensions based on certain criteria."

35

Social Equity Licensees opened in the last 12 months across the State

20

Standard Dispensary

3

Micro Processor

4

Standard Grower

2

Micro Grower

3

Standard Processor

3

Micro Dispensary

Public Engagement

In its first year, DoSEM brought Annapolis to Maryland and connected locally with Maryland businesses, community, and residents, holding and attending listening sessions, procurement workshops, training webinars, partner conferences, and exhibit tables across the State. DoSEM is growing its staff, including hiring regional outreach coordinators to expand engagement in every region.

199

engagements in year one, across every event type

18,378

people reached at DoSEM and partner events

19

T.I.P.S. training webinars held in the first year

Recurring series

(19) T.I.P.S. training webinars. Monthly technical assistance on certification, bidding, and doing business with the State.

(4) Ready, Set, GROW! Procurement Connections events. Workshops pairing certified firms with agency buyers, held at MGM Casino and Hotel, Ocean Downs Casino, and Rocky Gap Casino Resort in Western Maryland. The series continues October 21 in 2026.

(3) "Doing Business With" Events. These events pair regulated entities with business owners who specifically want to work with the individual regulated entity, and grow the connections to small, disadvantaged, minority-owned, and women-owned businesses. Business resources are also available at this event to ensure DoSEM is connecting the Economic Mobility Ecosystem throughout Maryland.

Also this quarter

Maryland Association of Counties Summer Conference. DoSEM presented on the Community Reinvestment and Repair Fund on August 14 and joined the conference's diversity, equity and inclusion affinity meeting. Secretary Simmons spoke on the panel "Reinvesting in Maryland: Cannabis Revenue, Community Repair, and Economic Opportunity."



Attendees at a Voices of Maryland listening session with Towson University.



Business owners at a Ready, Set, GROW! workshop at MGM National Harbor.

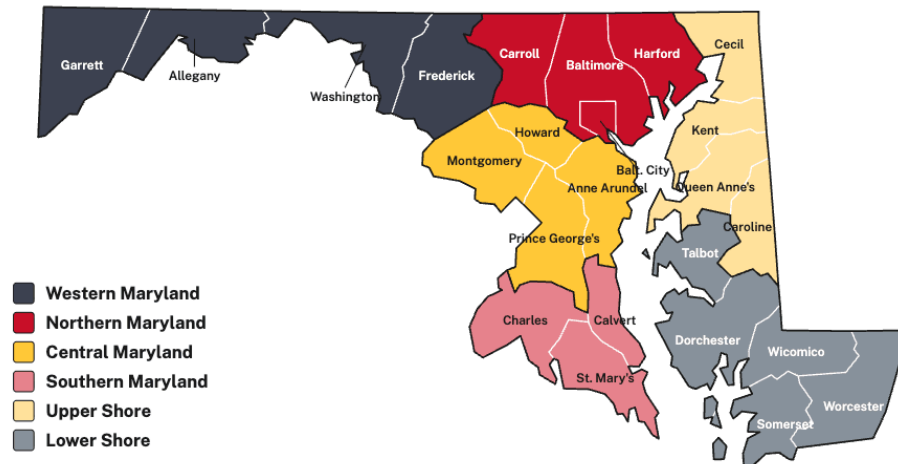


Secretary Simmons on a panel at the MACo 2026 Summer Conference.

Voices of Maryland

Voices of Maryland is an effort to continually develop the Economic Mobility Ecosystem of the State of Maryland through a Collective Impact Model. In FY 2026, we held 64 meetings across the 24 jurisdictions of Maryland, informing the DoSEM Social Equity Report submitted on July 1, 2026 and the ongoing work of building the department.

Entering FY 2027, the program is more important than ever. Our goal is to connect with all six types of external stakeholders within each region of Maryland by the end of Fiscal Year 2027.



The six regions

NORTHERN MARYLAND

Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Carroll County, Harford County

WESTERN MARYLAND

Garrett County, Allegany County, Washington County, Frederick County

CENTRAL MARYLAND

Prince George's County, Montgomery County, Anne Arundel County, Howard County

SOUTHERN MARYLAND

Charles County, St. Mary's County, Calvert County

UPPER SHORE

Cecil County, Kent County, Caroline County, Queen Anne's County

LOWER SHORE

Talbot County, Dorchester County, Wicomico County, Worcester County, Somerset County

Priority engagement entities

Local Government Entities

23 counties and Baltimore City: county executive or mayor's office, county and city councils, procurement offices, supplier diversity offices

Economic Development Agencies and Organizations

Including local workforce development boards

Chambers of Commerce

Regional and local chambers across the State

Institutions of Higher Education

Community colleges, four-year colleges and universities, HBCUs (targeted separately), apprenticeship programs, historic trade programs, workforce training programs

Trade Associations

Industry organizations and business improvement organizations

Financial Institutions

Banks, credit unions, and community development lenders

Stories from the Community



Christopher Jarrell, Winsupply of Jessup, Howard County.

Small Business Reserve Program Powers 15-Year Turnaround

Winsupply of Jessup, based in Jessup, Howard County, was trying to turn around a struggling business while figuring out how to reach new customers. The biggest hurdle was knowing how to access government, school, and institutional opportunities, including who to connect with.

DoSEM's outreach and Small Business Reserve (SBR) resources helped Winsupply connect with the right people, win new public-sector opportunities, and accelerate the company's turnaround. The results were significant: 4 jobs created, 250% revenue growth, and a business that hadn't been consistently profitable for roughly 15 years turned into a sustainably profitable, growing company serving multiple school districts, government agencies, and major institutions.



Joi Bannister, Joyful Signing, LLC, Prince George's County.

MBE-Certified Interpreting Firm Opens Doors to Major Maryland Contracts

Joi Bannister is CEO of Joyful Signing, LLC, a DBE-, MBE-, WBENC-, and NMSDC-certified interpreting business based in Accokeek, Prince George's County. Before connecting with DoSEM, one of her biggest challenges was navigating the MBE certification and recertification requirements: detailed, time-intensive work requiring extensive documentation and financial records.

Through ongoing conversations with DoSEM, Joi was able to explain the distinct nature of the interpreting profession (how services are delivered, staffed, and contracted), helping bridge the gap between standard certification requirements and the realities of her industry. Certification then opened doors to work with organizations including MGM National Harbor and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC). Since becoming certified, Joyful Signing has grown to more than 20 full-time positions and over 400 independent contractors.

"Certification isn't just a status: it's a doorway. It transformed how I could show up in the marketplace and build real partnerships with fellow Maryland MBEs that continue to grow my business today."

Stories from the Community, continued



Collin McIlvried and Kyle Gamble, Green Genie, Cecil County.

Social Equity Cannabis Licensee Launches Micro-Cultivation Facility in Cecil County

Collin McIlvried, a Marine Corps veteran from Elkton, partnered with Kyle Gamble, who was previously incarcerated for cannabis in Pennsylvania. Kyle's background made him eligible for Maryland's adult-use cannabis social equity license lottery.

As they worked to open a micro-cultivation facility in Cecil County, banks would not lend to cannabis businesses and private lenders offered predatory terms. They also faced zoning challenges and a strict State timeline to become operational.

DoSEM's Office of Social Equity (OSE) awarded Green Genie a \$14,000 Technical Assistance Grant and \$157,500 from the Cannabis Business Assistance Fund (CBAF). The business opened in February 2026.

"The grants from OSE quite literally made the difference in us becoming operational or not."

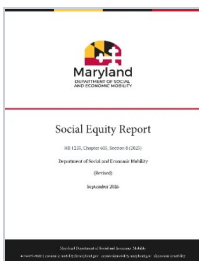
Reports and Publications



FY2025 Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2025 participation in the Minority Business Enterprise, Small Business Reserve, and Veteran-Owned Small Business Enterprise programs across State agencies.

[Read the FY2025 Annual Report](#)



Social Equity Report

Submitted to the Governor and General Assembly by July 1, 2026, as required by Chapter 605 (Acts of 2025), this inaugural report sets Maryland's first statewide baseline of social equity programs. It reviews more than 150 programs across 25 agencies and entities. The report found that Maryland does not lack social equity initiatives. What it lacks is the governance, data, and coordination to align and evaluate them.

It makes four recommendations: expand the Office of Social Equity into a permanent statewide coordination office, give DoSEM a seat on relevant State boards and commissions, host an interagency social equity forum, and adopt a uniform statewide definition of social equity.

[Read the Social Equity Report](#)

Events Calendar

DOSEM EVENTS

OCT
8
2026

Doing Business with Maryland Casinos

A small business connection event, connecting businesses with procurement officers at Hollywood Casino Perryville.

Hollywood Casino Perryville

OCT
13
2026

2026 Women's Small Business Expo

A procurement connections expo in honor of National Women's Small Business Month.

Maryland Live! Casino & Hotel

OCT
21
2026

Ready, Set, GROW! Procurement Connections Expo

Speakers include Comptroller Brooke Lierman, Howard County Executive Calvin Ball, DoSEM Secretary Walter Simmons, DGS Secretary Atif Chaudhry, and more.

Howard County Opportunity and Economic Mobility Center

NOV
18
2026

DoSEM Veteran-Owned Small Business Event

SAVE THE DATE

PARTNER EVENTS

NOV
9
2026

Governor's Business Summit

Maryland Live! Casino & Hotel

SAVE THE DATE

Event registration available at economicmobility.maryland.gov

Stay Connected

Get certified:

MBE, SBE, DBE and ACDBE through B2G at marylandmdbe.mdbecert.com
CSB and VSBE through eMMA

Find a partner near you:

economicmobility.maryland.gov

Follow us:

@economicmobility on LinkedIn, Facebook
and Instagram

Questions about DoSEM:

General: economic.mobility@maryland.gov
Certification: mbe.dosem@maryland.gov

Request a DoSEM speaker:

Speaking request form at
economicmobility.maryland.gov

Forward this to a business that needs it:

Subscribe at
economicmobility.maryland.gov

Maryland Department of Social and Economic Mobility

100 Community Place, Crownsville, MD 21032

410-697-9600 economic.mobility@maryland.gov economicmobility.maryland.gov

Governor Wes Moore Lt. Governor Aruna Miller Secretary Walter L. Simmons

Work, Wages, and Wealth for ALL!