

GOVERNMENT

# International trade, biotech gain in DBED reorganization

BY ANDY ROSEN

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International trade and biotechnology are taking a more pronounced role within the Maryland **Department of Business and Economic Development**, under a staff reorganization announced Monday.

Secretary David W. Edgerley said the new structure for his department, which also consolidates many DBED functions targeted toward small business development, has been in the works for about three months and is now underway.

Among the highest-profile of the changes was the addition of the **Maryland Biotechnology Center** to the structure of DBED. The center, which is scheduled to open next year, is intended to concentrate state, private-sector and educational activities and help promote Maryland as a center for life sciences.

DBED has also been working of late to increase foreign investment in Maryland. The

new organizational structure has the international trade office reporting directly to the secretary. It was formerly responsible to the deputy secretary's office. The biotech center will also report to Edgerley.

Edgerley said the moves were not likely to alter the department's budget or programs, but are partially driven by the state's desire to spend more on biotechnology. Gov. Martin O'Malley has proposed spending \$1.1 billion on the industry over the next decade.

DBED is working to make existing programs more efficient, Edgerley said, and his hope is that they'll also be easier to use.

"It was time to look at how DBED was conducting its affairs from the inside," he said. Though Edgerley said programs were functional, "we were working with a number of silos."

Much of the department's responsibility

was spread between seven specialized offices, which will be combined into three: economic development, marketing and business development, and tourism, film and the arts.

Only tourism, film and the arts was previously a separate office. Edgerley said the goal of the changes is to make it easier for businesses to access state services without dealing with several people within the same department.

Business leaders lauded the moves as a way to make the DBED more focused, while maintaining an even keel during tight fiscal times.

Donald C. Fry, president and CEO of the **Greater Baltimore Committee**, said the moves represent a commitment to life sciences and international trade, which he believes are solid goals. He said it's not sur-

prising that the department would see some restructuring under Edgerley, who took over in early 2007.

"It certainly seems to align the department based on what they've established as their emphasis and their priorities," Fry said. He said he was confident that existing programs will remain intact, even if they are moved to different offices.

Julie Coons, who is CEO of the industry association **Tech Council of Maryland**, said she is pleased with the decision to give new weight to biotechnology development. She said it will be a resource for existing businesses, and also a tool for drawing new activity to Maryland.

She said she hopes the program will succeed and drive more state spending toward life sciences, but said she does not think other programs are in jeopardy.

"I'm not concerned that there's going to be a focus taken away from something else," she said.



DAVID W. EDGERLEY