

Honorable Larry Hogan
Governor
State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Boyd K. Rutherford
Lieutenant Governor
State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr.
President
Senate of Maryland
State House, H-107
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Adrienne Jones
Speaker
Maryland House of Delegates
State House, H-107
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: MSAR #11434 - 2019 Annual Report Office of Small Business Regulatory Assistance (01.01.2018.04)

Dear Governor Hogan, Lieutenant Governor Rutherford, President Miller, and Speaker Jones:


Business Regulation Article Section 2-103.1 of the Annotated Code of Maryland requires the Office of Small Business Regulatory Assistance to annually report to the legislature on the performance and activities of the office. Specifically, the report must include:

- Data indicating the effectiveness of programs and procedures regarding permitting;
- Data specifying the number of businesses and individuals contacting the office for assistance;
- Recommendations regarding improvements to existing laws related to economic development; and
- Recommendations developed for the State Customer Service business development efforts training program.

The Maryland Department of Labor and the Office of Small Business Regulatory Assistance (OSBRA) are pleased to present OSBRA's Annual report. Since its inception in January 2018, OSBRA has quickly gained momentum by conducting outreach and assisting the business community. Moreover, OSBRA has developed communication tools and outreach strategies with the express goal of establishing partnerships to achieve results.

In 2019, OSBRA has continued to develop internal mechanisms and processes to facilitate assistance to small businesses, employees, and constituents. OSBRA now successfully manages inquiries, concerns, and compliance matters for Maryland's business community. Thank you for the opportunity to assist and serve Maryland's business community. We are honored to have this opportunity to work towards improving Maryland's business climate.

Sincerely,



Tiffany P. Robinson
Secretary

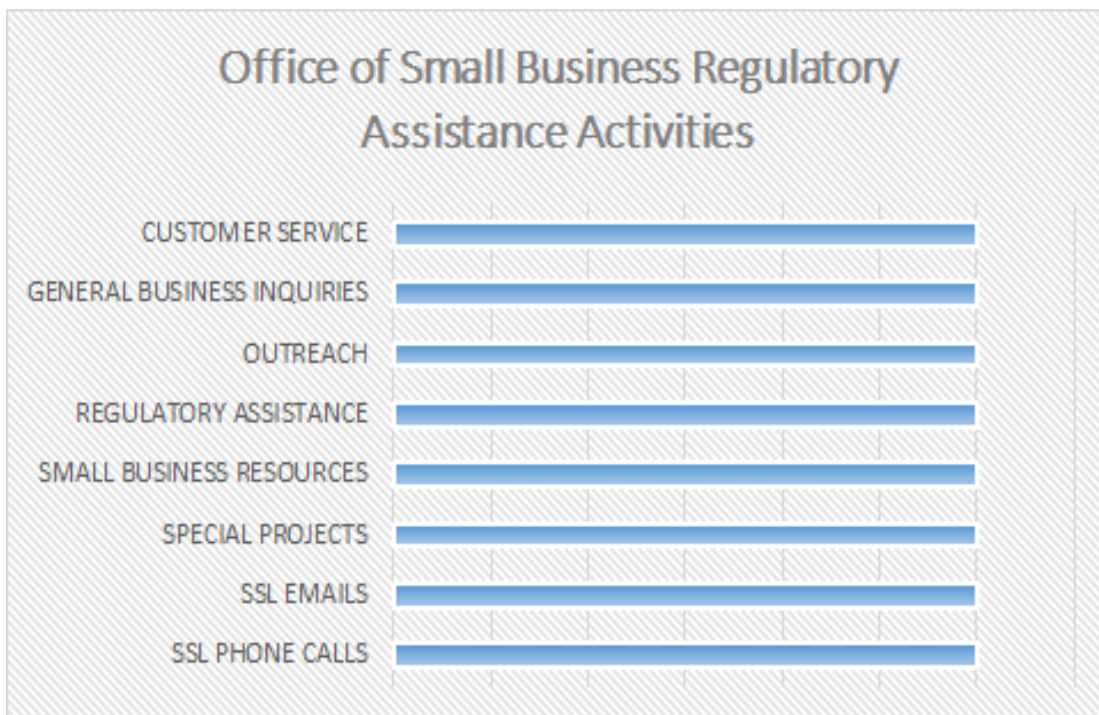
The Office of Small Business Regulatory Assistance Annual Report Fiscal Year 2019

Background and Mission

The Office of Small Business Regulatory Assistance (OSBRA), created in 2018 through Governor Hogan's Executive Order Number 01.01.2018.04, was established to assist the Department of Labor in disseminating information through outreach and assisting small businesses with implementation of Maryland Healthy Working Families Act and other regulations affecting Maryland small business owners and entrepreneurs. The Unit's charter also includes functions to: facilitate responsiveness of state government to small business needs, serve as a central clearinghouse of information for business assistance programs, and services available in the state. OSBRA also encompassed the ombudsman role that entails coordinating and collaborating with other state agencies to assist in resolving state regulatory issues for business owners.

The Office serves as a point of contact and liaison for small businesses between state and local agencies interfacing with for-profit and nonprofit organizations, chambers of commerce, industry related professional, and civic associations focused on small businesses.

Our efforts are achieved through active outreach to our customers and in-reach to our colleagues through electronic mail, telephone, chats, social media channels, webinars, direct meetings, partnerships, presentations, speaking engagements, networking, and event participation.



Regulatory Assistance

The team provides small business owners and entrepreneurs with information and business resources serving as a conduit to also assist them in navigating local and state regulatory processes and navigation within those agencies. This function has enabled our unit to regularly interact internally with other Labor units and collaborate externally with other state agencies.

An example of regulatory assistance: OSBRA facilitated various conversations, meetings, and activities with the Maryland Department of Health assisting Wye Oak Healthcare facilities with receiving overdue Medicaid payment reimbursements totaling over \$400,000 in revenue for the small business owner.

Customer Service

OSBRA works in tandem with the Governor's Office of Improvement and Performance (GOPI), Mike Morello, Director to administer the Governor's Customer Service Initiative. OSBRA is instrumental in the implementation of agency training sessions; annual reporting; selection and award processing for the Governor's Heroes Awards. OSBRA developed a Standard Operating Procedure to streamline the process and establish consistency for the award selection; the annual statewide Governor's Customer Service Report provides a highlighted compilation of agency reports acknowledging performance and processes implemented for improving customer service experiences throughout the State.

- OSBRA co-hosted two trainings for agency liaisons designed to provide information and exchange of ideas for "moving the needle" in improving customer experiences for both internal and external customer service within their respective agencies. The customer service surveys primarily serve as the measure of service obtained from customer feedback. OSBRA expressed the need for agencies to encourage feedback from all customers via the survey or other creative ways to gather customer input.
- OSBRA co-hosted the 2019 Customer Experience (CX) Day Celebration in October 2019.
- OSBRA staff served on the agency planning committee for the Department of Labor Employee Appreciation Day in FY19 and FY18.
- OSBRA initiated an internal assessment and analysis to obtain data regarding the nature and origin of complaints received from customer feedback on Labor's customer service surveys. The Office is building a database for feedback to determine the category of complaints and to identify methods, procedures, and best practices for improving customer service.

TYPES OF CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

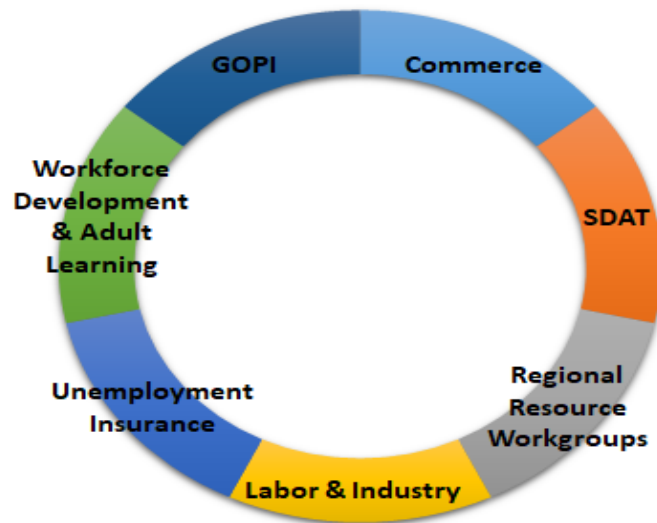
- Agency Non-Responsive
- Employment Training
- Forms/Documents
- Lack of Information
- Licensing Exams
- Licensing Renewals
- MBE/WBE/DBE/Veteran
- Misinformation
- Permits & Licenses
- Personnel
- Processing
- Procurement

- Registration
- Regulatory
- Regulatory Compliance
- Technical Difficulties
- Telephone
- Unemployment Insurance - Employee
- Unemployment Insurance - Employer
- Unable to Contact Agency
- Website

Special Projects

The OSBRA staff possess an impressive amount of talent and experience based on the aggregate of individual backgrounds. The team has vast, seasoned knowledge and skill working with the small business community. The team has easily transferred and shared those talents in assisting other agencies and organizations. OSBRA’s talent has provided additional opportunities for the team to assist, partner and collaborate with colleagues and customers internally as well as co-working externally with state agencies to accomplish special projects assisting constituents, small business, and entrepreneurs.

Collaboration & Special Projects Partners



Each special project has its own unique set of actions, functions and tasks required in order to provide optimal outcomes regarding collaboration. Special projects include:

- Serving as members on the Maryland Department of Commerce Subcabinet Small Business Workgroup
- Participating on Statewide Regional Resources Workgroups
- Assisting the Commissioner of Labor and Industry with Boards and Commissions membership and administration
- Collaborating with sister state agencies and local partners to enhance economic development for Maryland's business community and constituents
- Testifying before legislative committees on matters related to small business.
- Reviewing and preparing fiscal notes related to small business

Focus Moving Forward

OSBRA initially focused the majority of team efforts around the then new Maryland Healthy Working Families Act, or Sick and Safe Leave Law. OSBRA's primary function revolved around disseminating information to business owners regarding the new legislation and compliance. A great deal of time and manpower was exerted focused on business owners, employees, and constituent inquiries through dedicated email, dedicated telephone lines, and educational outreach activities. The increased awareness of Sick and Safe Leave has compelled OSBRA to revisit the Executive Order and redirect the Office's primary focus and strategy towards targeted statewide and local assistance for the business community to:

- Facilitate responsiveness of State government to business needs;
- Serve as a clearinghouse of information for business assistance programs and services available in the State;
- Assist by referring businesses and individuals to resources that provide business services or assistance requested;
- Identify and assist with resolving problems encountered by businesses with State agencies, regional, and local economic development organizations - public, private, and nonprofits;
- Coordinate programs and services implemented by state and local agencies.

In FY20 OSBRA intends to establish and maintain metrics in order to monitor the Unit's progress. OSBRA plans to improve methodologies, create mechanisms, build metrics that can be replicated statewide. OSBRA will continue to convey SSL information to small businesses. OSBRA will broaden its reach through statewide and local outreach to assist the business community, in addition to expanding the office's current scope and function. OSBRA intends to create synergy becoming the statewide "connector" for Maryland's business community.

OSBRA will begin to establish a model outreach strategy for small business advocacy, best practices, and education. The Office will communicate challenges, barriers, and ideas expressed by the business community to state government policymakers and leaders that affect laws and regulations regarding business.

OSBRA's primary operational shift will centralize and navigate business resources for constituents and Maryland's small business community in collaboration with state agencies, local economic development agencies, private and non-profit organizations, business resource stakeholders, and providers. This shift simultaneously enhances customer service experiences

internally and externally across state agencies. OSBRA's efforts will provide the components for developing a strategic plan. The plan will serve as the guide for ensuring Maryland's businesses are prepared to respond to new laws; well-informed with qualified information allowing them to take advantage of beneficial resources, programs, and incentives necessary to start, sustain, and grow their businesses.

Conclusion

The Office of Small Business Regulatory Assistance is constantly looking for ways to improve our engagement and broaden our outreach to our customers and partners. OSBRA is committed to assisting Maryland's diverse business community. In FY20 the Office looks to attain new goals that directly coincide with the Department of Labor's mission. We will continue to focus on Maryland's small business community exceeding customer expectations and customer experiences consistent with Governor Hogan's mission of "Changing Maryland for the Better" because we are "Open for Business."

Contact Information

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