

April 12, 2017

Dear Friend,

It has been a successful 90-day Legislative Session. I want to share with you some of the legislation that will positively affect our communities. Please read on for an update on certain bills that are awaiting the Governor's approval.

Protecting our priorities

The Maryland General Assembly unanimously passed a \$43.5 billion balanced budget that protected our State priorities without raising taxes. This budget includes the following:

- Our commitment to our public schools by investing over \$6.4 billion in K-12 education, the largest commitment in state history. Local schools gain an increase of almost 2% in funding compared to FY17.
- Total funding for the Medicaid program was \$10 billion, allowing the State to cover over 1.4 million Marylanders.
- This year's capital budget includes over \$4.5 billion for road repairs, library and hospital construction, school construction, and other projects that improve our quality of life and create jobs in the state's construction industry. This bill will support the creation and retention of over 46,000 jobs.

Maryland Defense Act of 2017 (SJ5 & HB913) – This Legislation and Resolution will provide the Attorney General with the directive and the resources to engage in offensive or defensive action to protect citizens of Maryland from harmful federal efforts.

Protecting the Chesapeake Bay (SJ8) - The Maryland General Assembly passed a Joint Resolution calling on Governor Hogan and Maryland's Congressional Delegation to speak out against cuts proposed to the Chesapeake Bay.

Protecting Maryland's Schools from Privatization (HB978) –The Protect Our Schools Act ensures that some guardrails are set up by the Legislature to take options such as school privatization off the table.

Ensuring that Employees don't have to choose between being sick and losing pay

Under **House Bill 1**, employers with 15 or more employees will be required to provide 5 days of paid sick leave to their employees.

Fighting Against the Heroin & Opioid Epidemic

The Heroin and Opioid Prevention Effort (HOPE) and Treatment Act of 2017 **Senate Bill 967**, tackles addiction through a litany of prevention and treatment efforts.

Ethics Reform

Under **House Bill 879**, the Executive and Legislative branches have increased requirements in reporting possible conflicts of interest.

Education Issues

Providing increased transparency to student loans

Senate Bill 429 requires all higher education institutes that receive state funding, to provide students with specific information regarding their student loans.

More Learning, Less Testing

Senate Bill 452 will limit testing and test preparation to no more than 2.3% of instruction time in a classroom, while at the same time requiring explanations for tests – why they are necessary, and how they are evaluated.

Energy/Environment

Banning Fracking

House Bill 1325 bans the practice of fracking from Maryland, as the legislature decided that the possible jobs from fracking were not worth likely health hazards.

Codifying the EmPOWER Program to reduce energy bills and fight climate change

Under **Senate Bill 184** the Public Service Commission must require each electric company to procure or provide for its electricity customers cost effective programs and services that have projected and verifiable electricity savings designed to achieve a targeted annual incremental gross energy savings of at least 2% per year.

Keeping Antibiotics Effective

Senate Bill 422 restricts the nontherapeutic use of antibiotics for livestock and closes the FDA loophole that allows antibiotics to be used for disease prevention.

Jobs

Creating Middle & Working Class Jobs

House Bill 467 requires the use of apprenticeships in large state projects.

Health

Planning for Long-Term Care

Senate Bill 696 creates a Task Force on Long-Term Care Education & Planning.

Leading the Nation in fighting Price Gouging

House Bill 631 would allow the Attorney general to take legal action against a drug company if the price of an off patent or generic drug increases by at least 50% in one year.

Public Safety

House Bill 642 expands the time period for a survivor of child sexual abuse to file for civil damages in the future.

Senate Bill 349 requires that a sexual assault evidence collection kit be turned over to a law enforcement agency and specifies when a kit or other crime scene evidence relating to a sexual assault may be destroyed or disposed of and when such evidence must be retained.

House Bill 1574 is a local Prince George's County bill that I sponsored, to create a Task Force to study Pretrial Release, Work Release, and Diversion Programs in our county. The Task Force to report its recommendations to the Governor, the Prince George's County Delegation of the General Assembly, and the General Assembly on or before December 1, 2017.

Senate Bill 12 is a bill I authored, that would change an object hanging from your rearview mirror from a primary offense to a secondary offense.

Protecting Victims of Domestic Violence from gun crimes

Senate Bill 224 requires those with a domestic violence assault – even if they have a Probation Before Judgement – to surrender their firearm.

House Bill 293 which I was the Senate cross-file sponsor, would allow an order or a decision in a domestic violence proceeding to be used as evidence in a divorce proceeding.

Wellbeing of our Military retirees

An increased tax break for military retirees

Senate Bill 295 allows for an additional subtraction modification for military retirement income, from \$10,000 to \$15,000 a year. While this legislation once again passed the Senate, it did not move in the House.

Consumer Protection

Senate Bill 681 which I was the primary sponsor, would prohibit a person from recovering specified bedding that is intended to be sold or offered for sale to a consumer in the State unless the person clearly marks the bedding as used.

Senate Bill 274 which I authored, would require the individual making the foreclosure to notify the record owner within 14 days after the postponement or cancellation of a foreclosure sale.

I thank you for taking the time to contact my office and voicing your thoughts on a variety of issues. My staff and I are always available to address your concerns. Please contact my office by phone at (301) 858-3745 or by email at Victor.Ramirez@senate.state.md.us for any assistance you may require.

Sincerely,



