



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

Economic Matters Committee

The 2020 Maryland General Assembly is my second year on the Economic Matters Committee, and my first as Chair of the Banking, Consumer Protection, and Commercial Law Subcommittee. This year, we considered a wide breadth of legislation dealing with business regulation, consumer protection, alcohol and tobacco laws, life and auto insurance, workers' compensation, fair wage laws, and more. I am thrilled to have a sponsored bill pass, *HB14*, which builds on 2016's Equal Pay for Equal Work Act which provides clarifying language. The original act prohibited employers from firing or taking adverse action against an employee who asks about a coworker's wages, but did not include workers' rights to inquire about *their own* wages. This bill would ensure that employees are not punished for making such a reasonable request; this bill fosters greater wage transparency. *HB3*, a major piece of legislation in the Economic Matters Committee aimed to prohibit the sale of all flavored tobacco products in the state. *HB3* passed the House but the Senate cross-filed bill was not in the same posture, so this legislation is not yet law. Also, *HB561 Community Choice Energy - Pilot Program* was amended to be a pilot for Montgomery County to become a community choice energy aggregator passed in the House, but was not voted in the Senate. *HB1056, The Racing and Community Development Act* preserves the historic Preakness Stakes at Pimlico Race Course in Baltimore City

Health

HB959: Health Insurance - Consumer Protections, which will protect critical components of the *Affordable Care Act* within the state passed in both chambers of the General Assembly. This bill will provide base level health insurance plans, allow children to remain on their parents insurance plans until they are 26 years old, and ensure coverage for individuals with preexisting conditions. *HB1095* allows the Prescription Drug Affordability Board (PDAB) to collect up to \$2 million annually from manufacturers who distribute and sell prescription drugs to Maryland residents. These funds will allow PDAB to continue its work to decrease the cost of prescription drugs for state employees.

Environment

HB209: Plastic Bag Reduction Act would prohibit retailers from providing customers with single-use plastic bags and impose fees on non-plastic carryout bags. This would incentivize customers to bring their own reusable bags into stores, significantly cutting down on the amount of harmful plastic that eventually makes its way into Maryland's rivers and streams. This bill passed in the House but did not pass in the Senate.

Judiciary

HB4: Public Safety - Rifles and Shotguns - Sales, Rentals, and Transfers closes a loophole in the background check process for long gun (rifle and shotgun) transfers by requiring a licensed firearm dealer to facilitate a private long gun sale. The bill

for generations and enhances year-round, sustainable thoroughbred racing at Laurel Park in Anne Arundel County. The legislation authorizes the Maryland Stadium Authority to issue bonds to revitalize the aging infrastructure at Pimlico and Laurel.

Women's Issues

Co-sponsored legislation, *HB123 Labor and Employment - Wage History and Wage Range*, which prevents employers from asking for an employee's wage history and allows applicants to request a wage range for a job that she is applying. This passed legislation will help to close the wage gap in Maryland.

Children

High-quality childcare is important for children's healthy development, but the increasingly high costs make it unavailable to the families that need it most. Therefore, I introduced *HB1559, Child Care for Working Families Act* which expands eligibility for state childcare subsidies to families based on the percentage of the family's income spent on childcare; and *HB1232*, provides tax incentives to employers that provide childcare subsidies to their employees. Co-sponsored legislation, *HB277* directs the Department of Education to provide guidelines on trauma-informed approaches to assist schools with understanding and responding to an individual with symptoms of chronic interpersonal trauma or traumatic stress.

Education

Following last year's passage of the landmark *Blueprint for Maryland's Future*, a major priority this year was securing funding for the comprehensive Kirwan recommendations to provide the next generation of students necessary tools to be prepared and succeed in our rapidly-changing workforce. To that end, *HB1300*, a plan that will transform Maryland's public school system over ten years passed; and *HB1: Built to Learn Act of 2020* complements the Blueprint with the largest

will result in tens of thousands of additional background checks in our state, ensuring each transaction is properly vetted. The General Assembly also passed *HB5: Hate Crimes - Use of an Item or a Symbol to Threaten or Intimidate*, which will expand the legal definition of a hate crime to include the use of hate related symbols to threaten or vandalize. We have also worked to pass *HB1629: Auditing and Tracking Gun Crimes*, in both chambers. This bill will require the state to conduct an audit of gun crimes to identify where we can best allocate resources to reduce violence.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS AND BALLOT QUESTIONS

Sports Betting Referendum gives Maryland voters the opportunity to decide whether or not sports betting should be allowed in the state. Maryland has been at a competitive disadvantage to its surrounding states who already have sports betting as part of their gaming offerings. If approved, Maryland would become the 15th state to legalize sports betting. *Balancing the State Budget* proposes a Maryland Constitutional Amendment on the November 2020 ballot to allow voters to decide whether the General Assembly can increase or add Executive Department items to the Governor's budget. The intent is to limit funding mandates; and allow the General Assembly to have greater input into the budgeting process. The State budget will still have to be balanced every year.

Montgomery County Focus

During this legislative session the Montgomery County Delegation worked to secure funding for schools, libraries, parks, and other County projects. Damascus Elementary was appropriated \$317,000 in funding. The District 14 team secured bond funding totaling over \$120 million for the OASIS Farm, Olney Family Neighborhood Park, Olney Theatre Center, Sandy Spring Meadow Basketball Court, and the Sandy Spring Museum.

one-time school construction investment in our state's history. This bill invests \$2.8 billion into school construction, prioritizing schools with the oldest buildings in most need of repair and replacement. Also, the General Assembly also passed *HB1260*, which provides \$577 million of funding to be shared across Maryland's Historically Black Colleges and Universities to invest in these schools' programs and help them stay competitive with other higher learning institutions.



State Operating Budget

The General Assembly worked to pass a balanced budget with bi-partisan support for the fiscal year 2021 and left over \$1 billion in cash reserves to guard against an economic downturn. This budget includes full funding for the Blueprint for Maryland's Future initiatives to overhaul our education system. Needed funding to eliminate staff vacancies and provide resources to better fight crime and reduce recidivism was allocated to Parole & Probation, Juvenile Services, Judiciary, and Corrections departments. Additionally, as part of the state's response to the coronavirus health crisis, the General Assembly authorized the Governor to utilize \$100 million to support unemployed workers, hospitals, and small businesses.

COMMUNITY ADVOCACY

Youth Day

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland (LBCM) held its annual Nathaniel Exum Youth Day in Annapolis which brings youth of color from all over Maryland to experience the legislative process. The youth had a lively debate about legislation that impacts their lives – vaping and hate crimes. The number of participants increases each year. I was excited to welcome many youth from Montgomery County. This event occurs each February; so, I hope more students will join us for the 2021 MGA Session.

Women's Rally

I was excited to once again sponsor the annual Women's Rally in Annapolis on February 17. This year, 2020 marks the 100 anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment which guaranteed and protected women's constitutional right to vote. Female and male legislators, advocates, and supporters of

2020 GENERAL ASSEMBLY DEVELOPMENTS

Coronavirus

The 2020 legislative session was abbreviated due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) health crisis. As Maryland began to see confirmed cases in early March, the state's leadership, Governor Hogan, Senate President Ferguson, and Speaker Jones took steps to preserve public health and safety in response to the virus. Due to the health threat that COVID-19 poses, the General Assembly made the difficult and unprecedented decision to end the legislative session early. **Prior to adjournment**, the General Assembly passed *HB1661* and *HB1663*, which allow the state to take emergency actions to aid the healthcare response and economically assist state residents. The General Assembly plans to reconvene in late May for a special session to complete unfinished work. During this time, residents are encouraged to practice social distancing to prevent further spread of the virus. This means avoiding going out in public to limit potential exposure. Governor Hogan's administrative guidelines can be found at -

women came together to highlight legislation which addresses violence and injustice against women, promote progressive healthcare initiatives, economic equity, and criminal justice reform for women. As always, I am thankful to my colleagues, all of the incredible speakers, and everyone who supported and attended this event to elevate issues impacting women.

Manna Food Drive

For the Martin Luther King Jr. Day weekend of service, I was at The Manna Food Drive at Giant Food in Olney, with several volunteers including Reverend Donald Kelly of Olive Branch Community Church in Sandy Spring, Maryland. To everyone who donated, I once again want to thank you for your generosity to address hunger in our community.

Black Girls Vote

During the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Rally in Annapolis to urge the State to resolve a 13-year-old lawsuit over disparities in academic programs, members of Black Girls Vote (BGV) from Morgan State University were among the many advocates, alumni, supporters, and others in attendance. As a faculty member at Morgan and the BGV chapter's adviser, I was encouraged by the students' advocacy.

Delegate Scholarship

Each year, I provide academic scholarships to District 14 students who distinguish themselves with high scholastic achievement and active community service. High school seniors, full-time and part-time degree-seeking undergraduates, and graduate students are encouraged to apply. For more information, please contact my office.

<https://governor.maryland.gov/coronavirus/>. This crisis has created a difficult time for the state, so we are moving forward and taking the necessary steps to protect the public and meet the challenges we are facing.

New Maryland General Assembly Leadership

This was a historic session for many reasons, and one of them is our state's newest Speaker of the House, Adrienne Jones. Speaker Jones has made history by being the first female and first African American Speaker of House in Maryland. Speaker Jones has served in the House of Delegates since 1997 and was elected as Speaker in late 2019. Because of the trying circumstances of the 2020 legislative session, Speaker Jones has risen to the challenge of a shortened session and global health crisis. I look forward to her continued calm leadership under-pressure in the future. Also, in the Senate after 33 years of leadership, Senate President Miller stepped down. Senator Bill Ferguson from Baltimore City who was elected to the Maryland State Senate in 2010 as the youngest ever-elected State Senator in Maryland's history was voted as the Senate President.

New Statues in the State Capitol

During Black History Month, Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass were honored with statues in the Maryland State House. Both historic figures were born into slavery in Maryland and became key activists in the abolitionist movement. These statues are installed inside the capitol's Old House Chamber—the same room where Maryland formally abolished the institution of slavery.

