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Baltimore City and Baltimore County



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Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee

Subcommittees

Chair, Education
Environment

Joint Committees

Senate Chair, Administrative, Executive,
and Legislative Review

The Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal
Bays Critical Areas

Chair, Baltimore City Senate Delegation

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

April 11, 2025

Dear Constituents and Community Stakeholders,

As the State Senator for Maryland's 43rd Legislative District – which spans both Baltimore City and Baltimore County – I am honored to serve as a member of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment (EEE) Committee and Chair of the Baltimore City Senate Delegation.

On April 7, 2025, the Maryland General Assembly adjourned Sine Die, marking the close of our 447th legislative session. The Senate introduced 1,047 bills, and the House introduced 1,558 bills, for a total of 2,605. The EEE Committee was assigned 541 of these bills. A staggering **878 bills have passed and been sent to the Governor's desk**, meaning approximately 34% will become law.

Each year, I send out this End-of-Session letter to highlight key accomplishments and provide transparency about our work on your behalf. This year's letter includes:

- **State Budget and Finance:** Balancing the budget and addressing the impacts of federal cuts
- **Key Session 2025 Policy Issues:** Legislative action on education, energy prices, public safety, reproductive care access, and environmental sustainability.
- **Sponsored Legislation:** Bills introduced, passed, and in progress
- **Baltimore City and County Legislation:** Priorities from both sides of the county line
- **43rd District Concerns and Priorities:** Issues that generated the most input and advocacy
- **FY26 Budget Allocations:** Projects funded to uplift and invest in our neighborhoods

I am grateful for your engagement, advocacy, and commitment to strengthening our community. Representing the 43rd is an honor, and I look forward to continuing our work together.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mary L. Washington'.

STATE BUDGET FY2026: PROTECTING OUR PRIORITIES

Maryland’s budget challenges this year were not the result of reckless spending, despite what some critics have claimed. The \$63.1 billion FY2025 budget actually includes \$1.1 billion less in appropriations than the prior year. While political sound bites may attempt to shift blame, the reality is more complex and rooted in broader economic forces.

Heading into the 2025 session, Maryland faced unprecedented fiscal pressures. Rising healthcare, education, and infrastructure costs and declining revenue projections created a significant structural imbalance. Revenue forecasts now show that by the end of the decade, ongoing revenues will only cover 84% of general fund expenditures, a more concerning trajectory than the state experienced during the Great Recession.

Abrupt and sweeping federal spending cuts under the Trump Administration have also exacerbated Maryland’s economic challenges. As a state with one of the highest concentrations of federal employees and contracts, Maryland is uniquely vulnerable to disruptions in federal funding. These cuts impact everything from public health and education to housing, workforce development, and the vitality of local economies dependent on federal employment.

In response, Governor Moore proposed a balanced approach to closing the projected \$3 billion structural deficit – combining strategic cuts with new, targeted revenues. That proposal sparked difficult but necessary deliberations in both chambers of the General Assembly.

The final FY2026 budget includes approximately \$1.6 billion in new revenues and about \$2 billion in spending reductions. It preserves critical services, avoids deep cuts to public health and education, and maintains over \$2.1 billion in the Rainy Day Fund, including a \$300 million structural surplus. The budget also includes a “federal trigger” mechanism, empowering the state to respond quickly to future federal rescissions exceeding \$1 billion by freezing discretionary funds and activating contingency plans.

Key Takeaways

- Closed a projected \$3 billion structural deficit for FY2026
- Included \$2.3 billion in spending cuts – \$500 million more than initially proposed
- Created new income tax brackets for top earners: 6.25% on income over \$500,000 and 6.5% on income over \$1 million (up from 5.75%)
- Increased the cannabis tax from 9% to 12% and sports betting tax from 15% to 20%
- Supported general salary increases for all state employees
- Delivered modest income tax cuts for 63% of Maryland families
- Rejected harmful cuts such as eliminating Medicaid coverage for 15,000 children and rolling back environmental protections
- Restored \$122 million in funding for public schools and \$297 million for disability services

KEY SESSION 2025 POLICY ISSUES

The 2025 session was defined by difficult choices, urgent needs, and a shared commitment to protecting Maryland's future amid federal uncertainty and economic headwinds. Legislators were tasked with closing the budget gap while responding to steep federal funding cuts, rising utility bills, and pressure on essential services like education, public safety, and healthcare.

Despite these challenges, the General Assembly moved forward on several major policy fronts:

- **Energy and Utility Reform:** With Marylanders struggling under record-high gas and electric bills, we passed a sweeping energy package to provide immediate utility bill rebates and expand renewable and reliable power sources. The legislation also enhances transparency and accountability for utilities seeking multiyear rate hikes.
- **Protecting the Blueprint for Maryland's Future:** Negotiations continued on adjustments to Maryland's landmark education reform law. While the House and Senate differed on the pace and structure of implementation, both chambers reaffirmed their commitment to community schools, teacher support, and student success – especially in underserved areas.
- **Public Health and Reproductive Access:** Lawmakers authorized the use of longstanding insurance surcharges to create a \$25 million fund supporting abortion care access for uninsured and underinsured individuals, advancing reproductive justice and financial equity.
- **Justice, Equity, and Reparations:** The General Assembly debated historic measures to provide a “second look” for incarcerated individuals, study the impacts of past racial injustice through a Reparations Commission, and modernize deathcare practices to reflect environmental and health equity.
- **Environment, Education, and Elections:** As one of the Senate's busiest and most wide-ranging committees, the EEE Committee took on some of the session's most complex and high-impact issues. From safeguarding election integrity and advancing environmental protection to ensuring access to quality education and honoring the needs of veterans and working families, the committee's work reflected Maryland's evolving priorities.

SPONSORED LEGISLATION

This session's agenda reflected our commitment to a more just, healthy, and equitable Maryland. We advanced legislation to improve housing, strengthen democracy, protect public health, and address historical inequities. These efforts were shaped by community feedback, evidence-based policy, and cross-sector collaboration.

Several bills are headed to the Governor's desk; others laid the groundwork for future sessions. Together, they represent progress toward a more inclusive and responsive government that centers the needs of everyday Marylanders.

To The Governor's Desk

- **The Limited Worker Cooperative Association Act (SB144)** is a landmark bill that creates a new business entity type to support worker-owned businesses and cooperatives in Maryland. We've worked on this since 2023 to bring labor, small business, and legal experts together, and the result is a meaningful boost to Maryland's cooperative economy.
- **Health Code Revisions (SB163)** updates and modernizes the Maryland Health Code by replacing outdated language to "mental hygiene" with "mental health."
- **Risk-Limiting Audits (SB313)** implements gold-standard election verification practices. After years of advocacy since 2022, this is a major step toward trusted and transparent elections.
- **Hunger Free Campus (SB789)** expands eligibility for Maryland's Hunger-Free Campus designation to include private colleges and universities. It's a step toward eradicating food insecurity among college students and builds on years of work.
- **Accessory Dwelling Units (SB891)** implements key recommendations from the statewide Accessory Dwelling Unit Task Force and empowers local governments to expand ADU options, supporting intergenerational living and aging in place. We've championed this since 2022 as part of our long-term strategy to make housing more accessible and affordable.
- **Community Reinvestment and Repair Fund (SB894)** adds clear parameters for how CRRF grants are distributed, ensuring fairness, transparency, and accountability in investments for communities harmed by the war on drugs.

Major Disappointments That We'll Fight for Next Session

- **Interjurisdictional Watersheds (SB42)** would have codified flood-prone watersheds like Herring Run to improve flood prevention. A key priority for East Towson residents. The bill stalled in the House Environment and Transportation Committee.
- **Social Work Licensure Reform (SB379)** would have eliminated the exam requirement for bachelor's and master's level social work licensure. The bill, shaped by a multi-year taskforce, addressed workforce shortages and exam disparities affecting social work graduates. It stalled in the Senate Finance Committee.
- **Comprehensive Rehabilitative Prerelease Services - Female Incarcerated Individuals (SB632)** would have required a dedicated prerelease facility for women, with trauma-informed reentry services including job training and family reunification support. Despite mandates from 2020, no such facility exists. The bill stalled in the House Judiciary Committee.
- **Study on Deathcare and Funeral Practices (SB671)** would have directed the Office of Cemetery Oversight to examine the environmental and public health impacts of deathcare methods. It stalled in the House Rules Committee.

Introduced Bills That Did Not Advance

- **Early Childhood Representation on State Board of Education (SB462)** would have added an early childhood development professional to the Board to ensure early learning expertise is part of statewide education policy decisions.
- **Maryland Commission on Health Equity Restoration (SB560)** would have restored the Commission's original purpose and membership to address the full spectrum of social determinants of health beyond narrow healthcare financing models.
- **Abandoned and Neglected Cemeteries Commission (SB631)** would have established a commission to identify, preserve, and support the restoration of abandoned cemeteries.
- **Division of Just Communities (SB890)** would have codified the Division of Just Communities in DHCD and expanded designation criteria to include environmental and public health disparities.
- **The Ratepayer Protection Act (SB998)** would have reformed Maryland's gas infrastructure spending program by requiring utilities to justify costs, prioritize safety, and protect ratepayers from unnecessary gas bill increases. However, some provisions of this bill have been included in the Next Generation Energy Act.

BALTIMORE CITY AND COUNTY LEGISLATION

Baltimore City

Alcoholic Beverage Licensing

The General Assembly passed several updates to streamline Baltimore City's alcohol licensing laws, including changes to Class B-D-7 licenses, district-specific adjustments, enforcement provisions, and temporary license extensions. These reforms aim to modernize the system and support responsible business growth. (*SB788/HB346, SB304/HB472, SB662/HB784, SB284, SB939, SB1013*)

Public Safety and Traffic Enforcement

- **Speed Monitoring on I-83 (HB913):** Authorizes speed cameras along I-83 to reduce crashes and improve safety.
- **Stop Sign Monitoring Pilot Program (SB600):** Launches a pilot in Baltimore City and Takoma Park to enhance pedestrian safety.
- **Neighborhood Services Unit – Sheriff's Office (HB1293):** Establishes a new unit focused on community safety within the Sheriff's Office.

Public Health and Revitalization

- **Sterile Syringe and Needle Exchange Program Revisions (HB1502):** Expands Baltimore City's sterile syringe exchange program to strengthen harm reduction efforts.
- **Property Tax Authority for Vacant Nonprofit Properties (SB550):** Allows Baltimore City to tax vacant or abandoned properties owned by nonprofits, encouraging revitalization.

Raffles and Charitable Gaming

- **Charitable Raffles for Major League Baseball Affiliates (SB341):** Creates a targeted exemption allowing organizations affiliated with a professional major league baseball team, such as the Baltimore Orioles, to conduct charitable raffles in Baltimore City under more flexible guidelines. Raffle tickets may be sold and received electronically, but only within a specifically geofenced area around the stadium. To ensure responsible participation, all ticket sales must include age verification to confirm buyers are at least 18 years old.

Baltimore County

Alcoholic Beverage Licensing

Legislation passed this session to support Baltimore County’s economic development and revitalization efforts through simplified license transfers, updated relocation rules, a new office-building license, and clearer procedures following license denials. (*HB987, HB746, HB1141, HB1145*)

Public Safety and Traffic Enforcement

- **Speed Monitoring on I-695 and I-83 (SB338):** Expands use of speed cameras on major highways to improve traffic safety.
- **Traffic Enforcement on Private Residential Roads (SB915/HB528):** Allows law enforcement to enforce traffic laws on private residential roads for improved safety.

Civic and Government Operations

- **Political Party Central Committee Elections Reform (SB352/HB562):** Improves the transparency and process for electing members to Baltimore County’s central party committees.

43RD DISTRICT CONSTITUENT CONCERNS AND PRIORITIES

One of the most meaningful aspects of this work is hearing directly from you – through emails, phone calls, letters, or stopping by our office. This year, we received over 800 unique contacts from constituents, reflecting the energy, advocacy, and deep care that define the 43rd District.

We received the most outreach about the following legislation: the **Protecting Sensitive Locations Act** (SB828), the **Maryland Data Privacy Act** (SB977), the **Excellence in Maryland Public Schools Act** (SB429), the **Mixed Delivery Model Viability Act** (HB1475), and the **Maryland Values Act** (HB1222).

In addition to your advocacy on legislation, many of you reached out for help navigating urgent and personal challenges. We worked with neighbors struggling with skyrocketing utility bills, helped resolve unemployment insurance issues, and connected families to housing assistance, legal aid, and healthcare resources. This side of the work is one of this office's most rewarding and important responsibilities.

A central theme in this year’s outreach was **concern over federal instability** – including uncertainty around executive orders, job losses, and the need for accessible support for impacted workers and families. In response, we’ve compiled helpful state and federal resources to assist residents affected by federal employment disruptions:

Support for Federal Workers and Contractors

Unemployment and Job Transition Assistance: The Maryland Department of Labor has curated resources specifically for Marylanders impacted by changes at the federal level:

- **MD Labor Federal Resource Hub** – Find unemployment insurance info, application portals, FAQs, and reemployment support: labor.maryland.gov/federalworkers
- **Governor Moore’s Resource Portal for Impacted Workers** – Offers legal resources, guidelines, and local support programs: response.maryland.gov/federalpublicservants

Career Support: Weekly job transition workshops for former federal employees and contractors on Wednesdays from 9 AM to 12 PM. Register by emailing: FedWorker.Transition@maryland.gov

FY2026 BUDGET APPROPRIATIONS

Each year, the Maryland General Assembly allocates funding to strengthen the workforce, expand healthcare access, improve infrastructure, and grow our economy. We also support community-driven “bond initiatives” that preserve historic sites, enhance public safety, and uplift neighborhoods.

Below is a list of community investments we secured in the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget:

- **NeighborSpace of Baltimore County – \$70,000** – Supports the design and implementation of streambank restoration and stormwater mitigation strategies near Harris Hill and north of the BGE substation, helping reduce runoff and improve forested open spaces in Towson-area communities.
- **Belvedere Improvement Association – \$150,000** – Funds the planning and site work for the revitalization of the “Old Diner Site” at 5837–5841 York Road. Improvements will include landscaping, removal of impervious surfaces, and upgrades to pedestrian and stormwater infrastructure as part of the Greater Govans revitalization effort.
- **Conscious Head Barbering Bootcamp – \$75,000** – Provides tuition support, scholarships, and program expansion for a workforce development initiative that trains aspiring barbers, offers free grooming services to vulnerable populations, and promotes employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.
- **Friends of Herring Run Parks – \$200,000** – Funds a stream valley and sub-watershed assessment and restoration efforts to protect and promote the natural ecosystems of the Herring Run Park corridor.
- **Gallagher Mansion and Outbuilding – \$200,000** – Enables critical infrastructure improvements, including electrical upgrades and HVAC replacements, for this historic senior housing property operated by GEDCO. The funding supports quality-of-life enhancements for low-income seniors.
- **Idlewylde Community Hall – \$280,000** – Supports renovations and upgrades to the Idlewylde Community Hall, ensuring it remains a functional, accessible space for meetings, events, and neighborhood programming.

Senator Mary L. Washington, District 43
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- **Pleasant Hope CDC – \$125,000** – Supports planning and renovation of 422 Hutchins Avenue, a historic African American middle-class neighborhood. The project will help preserve cultural heritage while creating a community-centered space.
- **Preservation Alliance of Baltimore County – \$100,000** – Funds the “Aging in Place, Aging in History” program, which provides critical home repairs for low-income seniors living in historic homes, preserving community heritage and resident stability.
- **TurnAround: Safety and Security for Survivors – \$45,000** – Supports enhanced security infrastructure for TurnAround’s new facility serving survivors of sexual violence, trafficking, and intimate partner violence. Services include counseling, legal aid, and crisis response.
- **Saint Pius X Property – \$500,000** – Funds the redevelopment of a 6-acre former school site into a community green space and recreation area in Towson, improving access to open space for nearby neighborhoods.
- **Vehicles for Change – \$200,000** – Expands vehicle repair and donation services that help families maintain employment. Funding also supports a new workforce development center within their Baltimore facility to train individuals in automotive services.
- **York Road Commercial Corridor – \$175,000** – Provides capital funding for pedestrian safety infrastructure and community signage along the York Road corridor, part of a broader strategy to enhance commercial vitality and neighborhood identity.

CLOSING THOUGHTS, CONTINUING WORK

As this session ends, I remain deeply grateful for the opportunity to represent you in the Maryland Senate. Together, we’ve advanced legislation, secured critical funding, and stood up for the values that define the 43rd District – equity, resilience, and community care. The work ahead won’t be easy, but I’m hopeful because of your voices, advocacy, and belief in a better future for Baltimore and Maryland. As always, my office is here to serve you year-round. Let’s keep building together.

- **Constituent Services:** If you need assistance navigating state resources such as housing, unemployment, healthcare, or legal aid, call our office at 410-841-3145 or submit a request online: senatormarywashington.com/constituent-services
- **Legislative Scholarship:** Students living in District 43 can apply for financial assistance to attend a Maryland college or university. Apply online: senatormarywashington.com/scholarship
- **Jobs & Internships:** Interested in joining Team Washington? Explore internship and job opportunities: senatormarywashington.com/meetteamwashington