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Legislative District 43
Baltimore City and Baltimore County

Committee on Education, Energy,
and Environment

Subcommittees

Chair, Education
Environment

Joint Committees

Chair, on Administrative, Executive,
and Legislative Review

The Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal
Bays Critical Areas



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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Dear Constituents:

Monday, April 8th, marked the end of the 446th Session of the Maryland General Assembly. At midnight on April 8th, we adjourned “Sine Die,” which was as gratifying as the opening day. Over 90 days, **2,714** bills were assigned and heard by the committees of jurisdiction in both Chambers. While each piece of legislation is important, only **495 (42%)** Senate bills and **562 (37%)** House bills passed both chambers and were sent to the Governor’s desk to become law.

Nearly 3,000 concerned people like you contacted our office by phone, email, or letter to let me know your support, opposition, or concerns about various topics. The following five bills received the greatest number of contacts from the 43rd District:

- SJR0005/HJ0002 - Supporting a Long-Term Ceasefire in Israel and Palestine
- SB349 - State Prescription Drug Benefits – Retiree
- SB738/HB785 - Freedom to Read Act
- SB893/HB1374 - Permitting Requirements for Crematories – Air Quality Permits
- SB595/HB879 - Health Benefit Plans - Calculation of Cost-Sharing Contribution

We look back at the legislative session each year and provide an “end-of-session letter” to highlight our 90 days in Annapolis. We have organized this document as follows: (1) 43rd District Top 5; (2) Sponsored Legislations, (3) Budget Actions, (4) Major Policy Debates, and (5) Governor and State Agency requested bills assigned to the Education, Energy and Environment Committee and finally, updates on the Key Bridge Collapse Tragedy.

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who advocated and spoke up, those who reached out or stopped by our office in Annapolis, and those who testified in committee or attended a rally. Your active participation is what makes Maryland, especially the 43rd District, a great place to live, work, learn, and play.

In partnership,

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

TOP 43RD DISTRICT ISSUES OR BILLS OF CONCERNS

Your overwhelming support and involvement before and during the 2024 Legislative Session have been inspiring and remind me why I love this work, this district, and the communities of the 43rd District. The following are a few of the bills that received the greatest number of emails, phone calls, and letters:

- SJR 0005/HJ0002 - Supporting a Long-Term Ceasefire in Israel and Palestine
- SB349 - State Prescription Drug Benefits – Retiree
- SB539/HB701 - Consumer Protection – Sale and Resale of Tickets
- SB738/HB785 - Freedom to Read Act
- SB893/HB1374 - Permitting Requirements for Crematories – Air Quality Permits
- SB595/HB879 - Health Benefit Plans - Calculation of Cost-Sharing Contribution

SPONSORED LEGISLATION PASSED BY THE SENATE

*(** PASSED BY BOTH CHAMBERS - ON THE GOVERNOR'S DESK TO BE SIGNED INTO LAW)*

SB430 - Community Health and Safety Works Grant Program and Fund **

Creates the Community Health and Safety Works Grant Program administered by DHCD to provide grants of up to \$100,000 to support local projects that address environmental, health, or public safety concerns and enhance community quality of life and economic potential.

SB500 - Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund **

This bill addresses the workforce shortage in childcare by enhancing the recruitment and expansion of degree attainment of existing childcare providers to pursue a degree that enables them to meet professional requirements under the “Blueprint,” increasing the service obligation to 20 hours a week.

SB524 - Gender Neutral Language in Statute **

Gender-inclusive language should be a priority for all policies and lawmakers to ensure accuracy, impartiality, and public trust. For example, the State Government Article of Maryland law will be revised to change references from “chairman” to “chair” consistent with parliamentary rules.

SB771 - Alternative Teacher Certification Pathways **

This bill expands pathways into teaching and presents more options for aspiring educators to achieve certification. It also addresses the process for initial certification of qualified teachers and other school personnel educated or credentialed in other states to be efficient and effective, encouraging more teachers and other school personnel to live and work in the State.

SB1084 - Workgroup of the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing **

This bill creates a workgroup to study the creation of a Commission of the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing. The Commission aims to be a resource for self-advocacy and community empowerment.

SPONSORED LEGISLATION PASSED BY THE SENATE, cont'd.

*(** PASSED BY BOTH CHAMBERS - ON THE GOVERNOR'S DESK TO BE SIGNED INTO LAW)*

SB1107 - DHCD Homeless Shelter Licensing Workgroup **

Maryland does not have a licensing and regulation scheme that addresses homeless shelters' habitability and admissions standards. This bill sets up a study of best practices for setting up a licensing program for state homeless shelters with key stakeholders' input.

SB85 - Maryland Limited Workers Cooperative Association Act

This bill will create a place in Maryland law to recognize and allow businesses to organize themselves as worker cooperatives, allowing them to more easily incorporate, receive loans, and conduct their businesses as cooperatives.

SB699 - Cannabis – Community Reinvestment and Repair Fund – Distribution and Use of Funds for Baltimore City

This bill would establish five separate “Equitable Community Investment Councils,” each with 15 members chosen from residents and community organizations within each geographic area to distribute grants from the Cannabis Community Reinvestment and Repair Fund. These Councils would not be selected solely by local government officials. They would have high levels of independence, accountability, and transparency to support operating and capital projects benefiting individuals and communities disproportionately impacted by the war on drugs.

SPONSORED LEGISLATION – TO BE CONTINUED . . .

The following are policy areas where my bills, as drafted, did not pass both chambers and we intend to work closely with stakeholders during the interim and prepare them for next session:

- ***SB85 - Limited Worker Cooperative Associations - Authorization***
- ***SB699 - Cannabis Community Reinvestment and Repair Fund Infrastructure***
- ***SB893 - Permitting Requirements for Crematories – Air Quality Permits***
- ***SB1088 - Public Participation in the Permitting Process***

DEEPER DIVE: *SB893 - Siting Requirements for Crematories and Crematory Incinerators and SB1088 - Public Participation in the Permitting Process*

SB893 would have prevented the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) from issuing a new air quality permit to a crematory seeking to build within 1000 feet of residential properties, child care centers, and comprehensive care facilities. Despite overwhelming community support backed by scientific evidence, SB893 did not pass this session. During the formulation of this bill and its hearings, a grassroots coalition of neighborhoods, residents, and community associations from across Baltimore City and Baltimore County came together to advocate for their communities' health. SB893 was only one approach that would have added guardrails to MDE's air quality permitting process. SB1088 was also a product of reviewing Maryland's environmental permitting processes and would have allowed for more public participation in this system. Advocacy has brought these issues to the forefront and will continue to be discussed in the interim.

BALTIMORE CITY AND COUNTY DELEGATION LEGISLATION

The 43rd District is a bi-county legislative district containing portions of the City (43A) and County (43B). Therefore, I am a member of both the Baltimore City and Baltimore County Senate Delegation and attended meetings for each delegation held separately on Mondays and Fridays each week.

Baltimore City and County Legislation

SB1174/HB1509 Baltimore Regional Water Taskforce: This bill extends the timeline for the Baltimore Regional Water Governance Task Force established in 2023 to continue its work to make recommendations to modernize the governance of the Baltimore region’s water and wastewater utilities to help ensure residents efficiently, equitably and sustainably receive high-quality services.

Baltimore City Legislation

SB894/HB0732 - Control Over Powers of Police Commissioner: This bill amends Baltimore City’s Charter to authorize the Baltimore City Council to provide oversight of the Baltimore City Police Department (BPD) and regulate its operation and conduct. The Baltimore City Council will have local legislative control over BPD, and this legislation will also increase civilian participation in the oversight and accountability of a city-operated police department.

SB643 – Public Information Act - Surveillance Images - Illegal Dumping in Baltimore City: This bill removes barriers to sharing surveillance images of suspected illegal dumpers so that they can be released to the public to help identify suspects.

SB138/HB 2-- Property Taxes – Authority to Set a Special Rate for Vacant and Abandoned Property: This bill establishes a higher tax rate for vacant and abandoned property owners in Baltimore City, which aims to pressure them into action - either selling, renting, or renovating these currently unused properties.

Baltimore County Legislation

SB451 – Board of Education – Member Compensation and Student Member Scholarships: This bill increases the annual compensation for nonstudent Baltimore County Board of Education members and the scholarship for Student Members.

HB495 – County School Board Nominating Commission – Records and Meeting Requirements: This bill increases the transparency of the selection process for the four appointed Baltimore County School Board members.

IMPORTANT ISSUE THAT DID NOT PASS HOUSE--SPEEDING ON 695

SB1067 – Speed Monitoring Systems – Interstate 695: This bill authorizes the placement and use of speed monitoring systems on Interstate 695 in Baltimore County. This bill authorizes the fines collected from violations to cover the cost of roadway and safety improvements on I-695.

SB450 – Speed Monitoring Systems – Residential Districts: This bill localizes decision-making for installing new speed monitoring systems. It allows Baltimore County to place speed monitoring devices outside of school zones without needing approval from the State legislature.

OVERVIEW OF GOVERNOR AND STATEWIDE BILLS OF NOTE

SB1188: Supporting Those Impacted by the Francis Scott Key Bridge Collapse The Protecting Opportunities and Regional Trade (PORT) Act was crafted to provide the Maryland Departments of Labor and Commerce with the funding, tools, and flexibility needed to respond to this crisis. Specifically, the PORT Act will:

- Ensure all workers currently out of a job and not fully made whole by unemployment insurance receive direct benefits;
- Provide resources to small businesses who want to retain their workforces but need assistance to do so; and
- Incentivize entities who use or rely on the port to do business to return to the Port of Baltimore after it reopens.

SB475/HB583: Establishing the Center for Firearm Violence Prevention This bill establishes the Center for Firearm Violence Prevention within the Maryland Department of Health to reduce firearm violence, harm from firearm violence, and misuse of firearms in Maryland by partnering with federal, State, and local agencies and affected communities to implement a public health approach to violence reduction.

SB482/HB694: The ENOUGH Act This bill establishes the Governor's Office for Children and the ENOUGH grant program, which will target communities with disproportionately high numbers of impoverished children. Localities can apply for up to \$10 million in grant funding to work in partnership to develop programs and services to reduce child poverty and decrease the risk of children and families slipping into poverty. Partnerships under the program must be collaborative and include one community-based non-profit, one local government entity, and one public school.

SB481/HB693: The Renters' Rights Stabilization Act This bill provides equal housing protection and opportunity for Maryland residents who access housing through renting. The act secures a "Right of First Refusal" so tenants who are renting a property for sale are given a chance to buy; creates an Office of Tenant Rights to advocate for renters in Maryland and provide technical assistance and information on renters' rights, and alters the priority and criteria in the Statewide Rental Assistance Voucher Program.

OVERVIEW OF GOVERNOR AND STATEWIDE BILLS OF NOTE, CONT'D

SB474/HB579: The Critical Infrastructure Streamlining Act This bill exempts onsite energy generation units from the Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) process under the Public Service Commission if they are primarily used for emergency backup or testing and maintenance operations for data centers. SB 474 does not allow these generating units to be connected to the grid and still requires that they obtain permits from the Maryland Department of Environment. These changes to Maryland’s public utilities law create exemptions for data centers, which are typically connected to the grid but need emergency generators to ensure 24/7 reliability.

SB472: Transparent Government Act of 2024 This bill requires principal government agencies and independent units in the state government to create and publish a catalog of permits, licenses, and certificates they issue, as well as the technology involved, processing timelines, and regulatory requirements. This legislation also creates the Government Efficiency Commission, which will monitor and review the efficiency of processing permits, licenses, and certificates. The commission is also responsible for recommending how to overcome burdensome requirements and create reliable processes.

SB705/HB728: The Access to Care Act This bill mandates that the Maryland Health Benefits Exchange (MHBE) apply for a federal waiver to allow undocumented immigrants in Maryland to purchase health insurance through the Exchange.

EDUCATION, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE WORK

FREEDOM TO READ ACT (SB738/HB785): This bill asks our educational partners in both state and local government to set policies and standards for our libraries to provide access to materials, services, and resources for the interest, information, and enlightenment of the public. SB738 states that: “A library should not exclude materials from its catalog because of the origin, background, or views of the author; and: a library should not exclude material from its catalog because of partisan, ideological, or religious disapproval.” This bill codifies trust in our librarians and guarantees a thorough yet timely review for any objections to books that arise. There was a great deal of committee and floor debate, and I was honored to defend this critical legislation on the floor of the Maryland Senate and help move it toward passage.

EDUCATION AND THE BLUEPRINT FOR MARYLAND’S FUTURE (SB937/HB1157)

(SB161/HB200) (SB1102): As Chair of the Education Subcommittee, I reviewed several important pieces of legislation altering the Blueprint and creating pipelines for educators in Maryland. These bills included SB937, which establishes the Grow Your Own Educators Grant Program for local school systems to support professionals who want to become teachers. Another is SB1102, which alters the Blueprint to include waiving fees and allowing grants for non-teacher educators looking to move to teaching. This bill also creates 30 additional Patty/Judy Family Support Centers to support parents over the next ten years. Community schools were also a topic of discussion in the committee. SB161 authorizes each county board of education with fewer than 40 community schools and receives funding from the Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program to spend up to 10% of the funds on community schools.

ELECTION LAWS (SB575/HB664) (SB480/HB585): The committee reviewed many laws governing elections, which were especially important in light of the upcoming elections in November. Further, we passed the Protecting Election Officials Act of 2024 (SB480/HB585) to hold those who knowingly and willfully threaten an election official or their immediate family accountable for their attempts to disrupt our electoral process.

CONSUMER PROTECTION- Retail Energy Protections (SB1): This bill continues my work (SB31 in 2021) on protecting constituents from predatory third-party energy suppliers. SB1 regulates and requires licensure for individuals selling electricity and gas supply agreements to consumers within the state. The legislation outlines terms for electricity supplier, energy salesperson, and gas supplier licenses issued by the Public Service Commission (PSC). By establishing licensing and renewal requirements, the bill seeks to ensure that only qualified individuals engage in these transactions, promoting transparency, consumer confidence, and protection.

ENERGY CONSERVATION (HB864): The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Plans bill (HB864) reforms the EmPOWER program, saving ratepayers \$4B since its implementation. This bill addresses Environmental Justice issues faced by low—and moderate-income families and requires reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH (SB567): The Cameron Carden Act of 2024 (SB567) establishes a consistent withdrawal policy that recognizes and prioritizes student well-being, including mental health, and guarantees reimbursement for extenuating circumstances. This legislation creates a standardized, legally binding policy to ensure students facing unforeseen hardships can prioritize their well-being without facing financial penalties.

STATE OPERATING AND CAPITAL BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025

This year's fiscal budget included so many incredible provisions and projects for a total of \$63.1 billion invested in Maryland. The Maryland House and Senate continue to set several priorities: education, infrastructure, healthcare, climate change, environment, and a “rainy day” fund for emergencies. This is not a comprehensive list, but we have made incredible progress toward achieving a more prosperous and healthy future for all of Maryland. We ultimately enacted the operating, capital, and budget reconciliation and financing acts SB360, SB361, and SB362, which invest in Maryland values, including:

- \$14.4B in Medicaid funding to provide healthcare coverage to 1.6 million residents
- \$9.1B for Maryland public pre-k to 12 schools, an increase of \$457M (5.3%), to fully fund the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future
- \$43M for the creation of the Governor’s Office for Children
- \$488M funding for the child care scholarship program supporting more than 31,300 children
- \$138.5M for rental housing programs
- \$50M for Project CORE, an initiative launched in 2016 to address vacant or blighted properties and encourage revitalization in Baltimore City
- \$21M for homeownership incentive programs
- \$257M to address the State’s transportation needs until the Maryland Commission on Transportation Revenue and Infrastructure Needs can complete its work this year

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- \$8M in new funding for violence intervention and prevention programming and \$10.3M for community-based services for juveniles and services to families residing in communities with high crime rates
- \$90 million for climate pollution reduction efforts and \$50 million for grants to electrify hospitals, schools, multi-family housing, and other community buildings

FUNDING LOCAL ECONOMIES AND ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS

The MGA worked collaboratively to invest historic capital funds to stimulate our local economies and provide Marylanders with family-sustaining jobs. That funding supports local institutions in the 43rd and invests State dollars in our community. Projects funded in Maryland’s 43rd Legislative District include:

- Baltimore Safe Haven Expansion Project (double bed spaces at the Safe Haven Shelter for low-income LGBTQIA+ community members) - \$250,000
- York Road Partnership (for the Board of the YRP for Greater Govans/York Road Corridor revitalization projects) - \$600,000
- York Road Business Improvement District (the construction and installation of new community signage along the York Road Corridor, street pole banners to promote local amenities, pedestrian wayfinding, and Safe Streets infrastructure to slow traffic) - \$205,000
- Clare Court II (Homes for America housing project that will have a total of 83 affordable apartments and a newly renovated community space) - \$350,000
- Leith Walker Elementary School (upgrades to the playspace at St. Charles Park) - \$180,000
- Sheppard Pratt Towson Residential Program (renovations to therapeutic crisis centers) - \$150,000
- Towson Elks Lodge No. 469 (capital improvements to kitchen and ceremony room) - \$215,000
- Northern Community Action Partnership (feasibility studies and design of the Northern Community Action Center project as a part of the Greater Govans York Road Corridor Plan) - \$300,000
- Old Diner Site-5837-5841 York Road (provides a grant to the Belvedere Improvement Association, Inc. board of directors for acquisition and restoration. This is a crucial initiative for the North Gateway of the Greater Govans York Road corridor planning area) - \$550,000
- Woodbourne Ave Four Corners Project (provide a grant to the Board of Directors of Govans Ecumenical Development Corporation for preliminary planning, including predevelopment and feasibility studies, and design of “The Markets on York, 5313-15 York Road”) - \$300,000

\$1,123,276,240 in capital funding for the following institutions in the 43rd District.

- Morgan State University - \$459,629,449
- Sheppard Pratt Health Systems, Inc. - \$1,500,000
- Towson University - \$644,332,337
- St. Joseph Medical Center - \$1,400,000
- Goucher College - \$3,192,663
- Loyola University Maryland - \$13,221,791