



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Dear Neighbor:

The Maryland General Assembly (“MGA”) recently concluded our 445th Legislative Session, and I am pleased to report on our legislative victories and the historic progress we made for the State. Being sworn in as your State Senator on January 11th was an incredible honor and a moment I will always cherish. In this end-of-session letter, I invite you to learn more about the seven bills that I passed this session, the significant capital funding to our District 33 communities that I secured, and the major legislation to improve the lives of Marylanders that I supported.

We were able to make the most of our legislative session despite an increased level of economic uncertainty and difficult budgetary decisions. Because it is the first year of a term, our goal was to put Maryland on a path to prosperity and advance issues that will define the next four years. We made historic investments in public education through the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future, created a path to economic prosperity for working families by expanding opportunities, improved the delivery of healthcare in Maryland, and invested in Maryland values through a responsible and balanced budget.

Our Legislative Victories

Getting elected to serve you in the Maryland Senate was always about the difference that I thought we could make together. Below you will find more information on the seven bills that I sponsored and passed, all with bipartisan support.

Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2023 (SB534): During the COVID-19 pandemic, telehealth was the only option for many Maryland patients and providers to deliver routine health care. During the 2021 Session, the MGA put many of these regulations into state law, allowing health care providers to continue delivering safe, reliable care via telehealth at the right place, right time, and the right modality for patients. SB534 continues this success by extending the existing flexibilities through June 30, 2025, which will give the MGA time to work with health care stakeholders to come up with a permanent solution that’s right for patients and health care providers.

Child Care Providers - Registration and Licensing – Exemptions (SB280/HB292): As a military spouse and military family advocate, I understand the unique challenges they face and the impact these challenges can have on all Marylanders. This bill eases unnecessary licensing burdens for military spouses who provide in home childcare and expands childcare options for military families. SB280 exempts DOD family childcare facilities from Maryland licensure requirements

if the facility is located on a military installation or if it is certified as a provider by a branch of the DOD or the U.S. Coast Guard.

Income Tax Checkoff - Maryland Veterans Trust Fund (SB354/HB316): Marylanders who have served our country should be honored and supported in every way possible. To live up to that commitment, the State established the Maryland Veterans Trust Fund (MVTF), which provides grants or loans directly to veterans and their families. SB354 offers Maryland taxpayers the option to contribute to the MVTF on their annual state tax returns, providing the MVTF with additional funding to expand the important work it is already providing in the State.

Public Health - Parkinson's Disease - Advisory Committee and Website (SB584/HB703): There is no treatment to slow, stop, or reverse the progression of Parkinson's disease nor is there a cure. This bill requires the Maryland Parkinson's Disease Registry Advisory Committee to establish a website that includes information (to be updated annually) on Parkinson's Disease incidences in the State. The Committee will also provide recommendations on creating a registry which researchers will be able to use to learn more about Parkinson's Disease, increasing the chances of finding better treatments and—potentially—a cure of the debilitating disease.

Maryland Audiology, Hearing Aid Dispensing, Speech-Language Pathology, and Music Therapy Act - Definitions and Application (SB449/SB401): Due to federal regulations meant to make hearing aids more affordable and accessible, there are now two categories of the device: prescription and over the counter. This bill updates the ability for certain providers to prescribe hearing aids, so Marylanders get to reap the intended benefits of the expanded access to devices.

Alcoholic Beverages – Manufacturer's Licenses and Off-Site Permits (SB448/SB595): In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the MGA provided flexibilities to Maryland distilleries, wineries, and breweries that allowed them to deliver and directly ship the products they produce to Marylanders as well as sell their products to Marylanders off the manufacturers' premise without a restrictive volume cap. SB448 would extend these flexibilities, providing continued business for our small producers and continued choice for consumers.

Real Property - Limitations on Summoning Law Enforcement or Emergency Services – Prohibition (SB450/HB215): Every Marylander should be able to call the police or medical services during an emergency. This bill would bar local nuisance laws from penalizing landlords and tenants for solely calling for assistance and would also prohibit a landlord from evicting or threatening to evict a tenant solely based on the calling of police or emergency assistance. This is about letting law enforcement do their jobs to address crime without jeopardizing Marylander's housing security.

Funding for Our Community

The MGA worked collaboratively to invest a historic amount of funds to stimulate our local economies and provide Marylanders with family-sustaining jobs. That funding provides vital

support to our local institutions and invests State dollars in our community. The following funding will have a direct impact on the 33rd Legislative District:

- Anne Arundel County Fairgrounds: \$102,000 to enhance the viability, safety, and security of the fairgrounds.
- Anne Arundel County Food Bank: \$200,000 for a new refrigerated mobile food bank and warehouse improvements.
- Chrysalis House: \$75,000 to build a Nature Trail, providing a therapeutic and restorative respite for women recovering from substance use.
- Crownsville Hospital Memorial Park: \$5 million for critical improvements as part of the years long effort to transform the property.
- Elks Camp Barrett: \$101,500 to update infrastructure for safety, security, and ADA accessibility, for a multi-season, 187 acre camp facility, used by groups throughout the county.
- Pascal Crisis Stabilization Center: \$50,000 to expand needed crisis stabilization services for citizens experiencing behavioral health and substance use disorder emergencies.
- Anne Arundel County – Joint 911 Public Safety Center: \$10 million in crucial funding to ensure proper equipment, training, and staffing to efficiently handle emergency services and save lives.
- Severna Park Train Station Building: \$26,500 to repair and make improvements to an historic building in Severna Park.
- Southern High School: \$2,200,000 for a new turf field.
- South Shore Recovery Club: \$56,000 to make building improvements to a Crownsville facility that offers a safe environment for members of 12 step programs, building a strong foundation for recovery.
- Swann Park and Willows Park Playgrounds: \$350,000 to replace aging and unsafe playground equipment with safe, modern, and inclusive designs at two parks owned by the Crofton Civic Association.
- Gambrills Village Commons: \$100,000 to update a community public meeting space and modernize the property.
- Lothian Grain Elevator: \$1.5 million to assist Anne Arundel County with the purchase of and improvements to the Lothian Grain Elevator to support our county agricultural industry.
- Luminis Health Anne Arundel Medical Center: \$863,000 grant for the design, construction, and renovation of a suite for adult behavioral health patients, improving access to behavioral health services.

Here is an overview of some of the most important issues the Maryland General Assembly addressed in the 2023 Legislative Session:

Investing in Maryland Values through a Responsible and Balanced Budget for Fiscal Year 2024: The core role of the Maryland General Assembly in any legislative session is passing a balanced State budget for the next fiscal year. Even as federal funding from the COVID-19 pandemic goes away and the Board of Revenue Estimates projects lower revenue through Fiscal Year 2024, we were able to make responsible investments to benefit our State’s residents and

economy. We ultimately enacted a \$63.1 billion budget (HB200 and HB202) that invests heavily in Maryland values, including:

- \$200M for tax relief for Maryland's veterans and working families;
- \$86M in public safety and victim services enhancements, including an additional \$46M above the statutorily required amount to fund police aid and to \$40M in increases to support domestic violence victims and rape crisis centers;
- \$2.85B in cash reserves, including \$2.5B in the Rainy Day Fund and over \$350M in the General Fund, with ongoing general fund revenues projected to exceed ongoing expenditures by over \$150M in FY24.
- \$14B in Medicaid funding to provide healthcare coverage to 1.5 million residents;
- \$8.7B for Maryland public pre-k to 12 schools, an increase of 9.1%, in addition to another \$900 million as a down payment on the Blueprint for Maryland's Future;
- \$250M to combat the climate crisis, including \$160M to support State parks and forests, \$60M for Chesapeake Bay restoration, \$15M for tree planting, and \$15M for projects under the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022; and
- \$200M available for new mass transit and transportation infrastructure throughout the State to allow flexibility should Maryland be awarded competitive federal grants;

Expanding Opportunity for Working Families: Maryland's working families continue to bear the brunt of inflationary pressures and a slowing economy. Although federal funding and the temporary expansion of benefit programs to support vulnerable Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic are ending, Maryland is stepping in to alleviate the burden that these families and individuals face. A livable, family-sustaining wage is foundational to reducing the impacts of poverty. That is why the MGA set our State on the path to a \$15 an hour minimum wage in 2019 and expedited its statewide implementation to January 1, 2024 this Session (SB555/HB549). In addition, the MGA made the expansion of Maryland's Earned Income and Child Tax Credits permanent (SB552/HB547), understanding that equitable tax relief will help to eliminate childhood poverty in our State. Finally, access to banking and capital is vital for generational wealth building. The Access to Banking Act will alleviate bank deserts in low- to moderate-income communities throughout the State (SB550/HB548).

Enshrining and Expanding Reproductive Freedom: After the U.S. Supreme Court's Dobbs decision overturned decades of abortion access law, Maryland has acted to protect the right to bodily autonomy. The MGA passed four bills to safeguard reproductive freedom and increase access to care on college campuses, while also protecting patients and providers from out-of-state investigations. These measures aim to enshrine reproductive freedom in the Maryland Constitution (SB798/HB705) and prevent political interference.

Enhancing Public Security through Gun Safety: Gun violence is a pressing issue, with increasing numbers of mass shootings in Maryland and the US. To address this, the MGA passed bills to prohibit carrying firearms in sensitive public locations like schools and daycares (SB1), enforce stricter standards for obtaining concealed carry permits and penalties for illegal possession (HB824), promote proper storage of firearms (SB858), and allow the Maryland State Police Gun Center to track surrendered firearms (SB185/HB3).

Developing a National Model for an Equitable Recreational Cannabis Market: After Maryland voters approved a constitutional amendment to legalize recreational cannabis, the MGA created a framework to regulate, license, and tax the industry in an equitable way (SB516/HB556). The legislation sets a national model for implementation of a legal market, learning from other states' policies that have undertaken similar initiatives. It also repairs the harms of the war on drugs by reserving licenses and lowering application costs for small businesses in disproportionately impacted areas.

Strengthening Maryland's Paid Medical and Family Leave System: Paid family and medical leave is crucial for Maryland families and workers. Access to paid family and medical leave ensures that Maryland families have adequate resources to support a new child or other loved one who requires care. The Time to Care Act was passed to provide access to paid leave for caregivers and new parents. To ensure the program's fiscal sustainability, its funding mechanism was strengthened to be affordable for both employees and employers (SB828). This helps Marylanders balance caring for loved ones and supporting themselves financially.

Improving and Modernizing Behavioral Healthcare in Maryland: The COVID-19 pandemic led to an undeniable and acute behavioral health crisis in Maryland and throughout the entire country. An increased sense of isolation and disruptions to healthcare services have put a strain on the entire healthcare system, but nowhere has that been more evident than in Marylanders seeking behavioral care. Going into the 2023 Legislative Session, one of our top priorities was to pass policies that accomplished dual objectives of improving access to care and modernizing the system of delivery. The Senate advanced a bipartisan behavioral healthcare package, including:

- Fully funding the 9-8-8 crisis hotline with \$12M per year (SB3/HB271);
- Extending collaborative care between primary and behavioral healthcare providers (SB101/HB48);
- Expanding wraparound services for children and youth most at-risk (SB255/HB322);
- Creating systems for comprehensive community behavioral health clinics (SB362);
- **Preserving affordable access to telehealth services (SB534), which I was proud to sponsor;**
- Allowing for creative healthcare for Maryland's highest-need patients (SB581); and
- Planning for a 21st century behavioral care delivery system (SB582/HB1148).

Reforming the Maryland 529 Prepaid College Trust: Coming into Session, we knew that one key area where to address was the Maryland 529 Prepaid College Trust. Families who invested in that type of Maryland 529 account received incorrect and confusing information that led many of them to make once-in-a-lifetime college enrollment decisions based on that faulty data. That is why we reformed the Maryland 529 program. We passed legislation overhauling Maryland 529 by abolishing the board and transferring administrative authority to the State Treasurer's Office; creating a claims process for impacted account holders; and incentivizing the phase out of the Prepaid College Trust in favor of other Maryland 529 plans that have consistently performed without issue (SB959).

Developing a 21st Century Workforce: To meet the demands of the 21st century economy, Maryland must develop alternative pathways to its workforce. One of the most promising

opportunities for workforce development is scaling up registered apprenticeships. The Maryland General Assembly is establishing the Apprenticeship 2030 Commission to determine strategies to grow apprenticeships from 12,000 to 60,000 by 2030 (SB104).

Prioritizing Public Service: Service is a powerful tool for bringing people together with a shared purpose and vision for what's possible. The Maryland General Assembly worked with Governor Moore to shape the new Maryland Department of Service and Civic Innovation and establish two service year option pathways under the Maryland Corps program (SB551/HB546). This legislation will ensure every Marylander interested in serving our community has the ability to do so.

Demanding Justice for Victims of Child Sexual Abuse: To provide justice and reparations for child sexual abuse survivors, we passed the Child Victims Act (SB686/HB1), removing the statute of limitations for civil lawsuits and creating more avenues for justice. The passage and enactment of the Child Victims Act has been years in the making.

Supporting Maryland's Veterans and National Guard: Maryland's men and women who have served in our Armed Forces with honor and distinction deserve recognition for that sacrifice. The Maryland General Assembly took steps to ensure veterans stay and invest in Maryland after their service, including increasing the amount of military retirement income that is tax exempt for State purposes (SB553/HB554) and establishing an income tax checkoff for voluntary contributions to the Maryland Veterans Trust Fund (SB354/HB316). Further, we put safeguards in place to remediate the issues currently facing the State-owned Charlotte Hall Veterans Home (SB974). Finally, the legislature passed the Health Care for Heroes Act of 2023 to award monthly grants to subsidize health insurance for Maryland National Guard members. (SB554/HB553).

Reestablishing Maryland as a Leader on Offshore Wind: Offshore wind is crucial for resilient and affordable energy. Indeed, the benefits of offshore wind go far beyond greenhouse gas reductions and include economic benefits ranging from job creation to manufacturing investments. The POWER Act passed this Session aims to generate billions of dollars in investments, create thousands of jobs, and establish Maryland as a leader in the emerging green economy with an 8.5-gigawatt energy target and an efficient procurement process (SB781).

Lowering Energy Costs for Marylanders: To lower Marylanders' monthly energy bills and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, energy efficiency improvements are crucial. The legislature mandated the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development to provide energy efficiency improvements for low-income housing (SB144/HB169) and made the community solar pilot program permanent with a requirement for low- or middle-income participation (SB613/HB908). The Net Metering Flexibility Act was also passed to allow customers to benefit from excess energy generation indefinitely.

Protecting Maryland's Environment for Future Generations: One of the most critical responsibilities facing the legislature each year is to ensure the stewardship of Maryland's natural resources for generations to come. This session, we meaningfully updated Maryland's Forest Conservation Act (FCA) for the first time since 1991 in order to achieve a "no-net-loss" of forest standard while giving local jurisdictions much-needed flexibility to align forest conservation needs with local land use priorities (SB526/HB723). Second, we tapped into available federal funding

for conservation efforts that we had previously been unable to access by modestly raising fees for hunting licenses for the first time in over three decades (SB327/HB983). Additionally, the General Assembly took the first steps to ensure that industry is a genuine stakeholder in recycling programs and mitigate the costs passed on to local governments by establishing a producer responsibility program for packaging materials (SB222).

Transforming Our State's Transportation Sector: One of the most important issues of this four-year term will be transforming Maryland's transportation sector and infrastructure to meet 21st century needs. Car manufacturers are ramping up the production of electric vehicles over the next decade and it is critical that we build out a system of incentives and charging infrastructure to meet that increasing demand. The General Assembly passed legislation to adopt the Advanced Clean Truck Rule to reduce emissions from medium- and heavy-duty vehicles, provide incentives to mitigate the cost of those zero emission trucks, and increase funding for the electric vehicle recharging equipment rebate program (SB224/HB230 and HB550). Further, we required that newly constructed homes or those undergoing significant renovations include electric vehicle charging capability (SB477/HB830). Finally, as Marylanders minimize their reliance on gasoline, we recognize that the State must have a long-term discussion to maintain transportation infrastructure funding that is currently provided through a tax on motor fuel. The legislature is planning for a 21st century transportation sector by creating the Maryland Commission on Transportation Revenue and Infrastructure Needs, which will guide our work to stabilize funding for critical transit infrastructure as vehicle electrification increases (SB24/HB51).

In Closing – Thank You

The adjourning, *sine die*, of the 2023 Legislative Session marks the end of the first session as your Senator. I am deeply grateful for your trust in me to serve as your representative in the Maryland Senate. However, I can only do my job to the best of my ability when I hear from you directly.

Over the interim, I will continue to host community events and town halls to remain as accessible as possible you—and it would be my honor to join you at any community event, HOA, or PTA meeting in your community. To invite me to an event, raise an issue you are having with a state agency or program, or share a concern that could be solved by legislation, please do not hesitate to reach out by calling the office at (410) 841-3568 or by sending an email to dawn.gile@senate.state.md.us.

Sincerely,



Dawn D. Gile
Senator, District 33