

April 15, 2016

Dear Friends:

As the 2016 legislative session comes to a close, I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for sharing your concerns on the many important issues facing us this session. I tried to keep up-to-date on your emails and calls, and to respond to as many as possible.

**HB-211 – The Pollinator Protection Act of 2016.** I was the primary sponsor of this very important, landmark legislation. Bees and other pollinators are essential to our environment and agricultural economy. Nearly a third of our food supply depends on pollinators, and they are in danger. Maryland lost more than 60 percent of pollinating bees in one year. The reasons are complex, but scientific evidence shows that pesticides containing neonicotinoid toxins are harmful to the bees. With my bill, Maryland will become the first state in the nation to ban the private use of neonicotinoids. It took three years of hard work, and I am grateful to the support of the environmental community and proud of our Environment & Transportation Committee. The legislation received bi-partisan support and passed with strong majorities in both houses.

**Prince George's County Regional Medical Center:** For many years now, the State has been working with a variety of partners, including the University of Maryland Medical System, to create a new, state-of-the-art Regional Medical Center in Prince George's County. As we approach the final stages in its development, this year we passed legislation to codify the State's commitment to the new hospital, mandating that the Governor include essential funding over the next five years.

**Education: The FY2017 Operating Budget finally, for the first time,** fully funds the State's 10-year-old Bridge to Excellence formula for K-12 public education at \$6.3 Billion. This happened thanks to legislation passed last year that closed a loophole and required Gov. Hogan to include all the funding. Prince George's County Public Schools will receive \$1.1 Billion, an increase of 4.9% over FY 2016.

The following pages outline additional highlights of the 2016 Session. As always, I appreciate your comments and support. It is an honor serving as your Delegate in the General Assembly, and thank you again for placing your confidence in me.

Sincerely,



Anne Healey

## **Sustainable Oyster Harvest Act of 2016**

Years of over-harvesting, disease, and habitat loss have led to a dramatic decrease in the oyster population over the past century. Because oysters are an essential part of the Chesapeake Bay, filtering bay water and creating a clean habitat for fish and wildlife we passed this legislation to require the Department of Natural Resources to work with the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (UMCES) to conduct a comprehensive study.

## **Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Act – Reauthorization**

Due to global warming, scientists on the Maryland Commission on Climate Change project that Maryland will experience between 2.1 and 5.7 feet of sea level rise over the next century. Some facilities of the Port of Baltimore could be flooded, placing one of the most important ports along The East Coast at risk. This bill requires Maryland to reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions by 40 percent from 2006 levels by 2030.

## **Operating Budget**

Maryland continues to be an excellent steward of taxpayer money – one of nine states with a triple-A bond rating. Maryland has maintained this rating for over 50 years, when the rating system first started, because “financial operations are conservatively managed.” (Fitch Rating Agency 2015).

- We have balanced this year’s budget and fully eliminated the \$2 billion structural deficit left by the Great Recession.
- We were able to leave a cash balance of \$415 Million plus \$1 Billion in the Rainy Day Fund, for a total of nearly \$1.5 Billion in cash.
- This budget caps college tuition increases at 2%. The General Assembly over the past decade has reined in the skyrocketing costs of college tuition: Maryland has gone from the 7<sup>th</sup> most expensive to the 24<sup>th</sup> least expensive tuition in the country.
- Healthcare funding increases by 4.4% across the State, including increases for providers of developmental disability programs.

This is the third year in a row that we will pass a budget with no new tax increases – spanning two different governors.

## **Capital Budget**

For this year’s capital budget, we stayed within the Governor’s requested limit of \$995 million.

### **School Construction**

We provided \$280 million for school construction in his budget. The House added an additional \$51 million. In total, the capital budget provides Maryland with \$330.8 million for school construction. The school construction budget leverages \$400 million in local investments.

### **Other Funding**

- \$442 million for environmental initiatives.
- \$68 million for health and human services, including \$27.5 million for the new Prince George’s Hospital.
- \$120 million for housing (all sources)
- \$15 million for House and Senate legislative initiatives.

## **Justice Reinvestment Act**

The General Assembly agreed to sweeping changes in Maryland's criminal justice policies. This comprehensive reform of the criminal justice system emphasizes treatment over incarceration for those who possess drugs, changes parole strategy, reduces sentences for some offenses and makes terms longer for others. The goal is to make Maryland safer and reduce incarceration rates.

## **Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education**

It is time to update the landmark "Thornton Commission" Bridge-to-Excellence public school funding formula. This year we passed legislation to create a new Commission to take a fresh look at what needs to be done to continue the progress we have made in assuring that all children in Maryland have access to high quality educational opportunities and that our schools are prepared to meet the educational needs of every child.

## **Equal Pay for Equal Work**

In 2014, women earned 79% of what men earned in the United States. At this pace, it would take 45 years to achieve pay equity. This is unacceptable and we have addressed it with new legislation. Under this bill, employers may not discriminate because of gender or gender identity. It prohibits non-disclosure agreements that would prevent workers from discussing their pay with others. It also protects employees from being punished at work for exercising their statutory rights and authorizes an employee to sue for damages and injunctive relief.

**The Maryland Healthy Working Families Act** (Passed House). This was a partial victory as we attempted to address a serious problem:

- More than 700,000 Maryland workers are unable to earn paid sick days.
- Nationally, 40% of private-sector workers are unable to earn paid sick days.
- The bottom quarter of earners suffer the most: 75% of them don't get paid sick leave.

## **The Maryland Healthy Working Families Act** (continued)

House Bill 580 did not make all the way through the legislative process. Time ran out before the Senate took a vote, but is a major step forward anyway. We will be revisiting the issue next year. HB 580 would have allowed workers at businesses with 15 or more employees to earn 1 hour of paid sick leave for every 30 hours worked -- up to 7 days (or 56 hours) per year.

I personally sponsored legislation to address a similar problem faced by people hired by the counties under a State grant program that leaves them with the status of contractors who do not have to receive any leave or benefits which they would have if they were regular employees of the county government. I hope that this issue also will be revisited next year.

**Additional information and details may be found on the Maryland General Assembly website: [mgaleg.maryland.gov](http://mgaleg.maryland.gov).**