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Dear Friends:

The 2019 legislative session has now come to a close. I want to thank all of my constituents for allowing me the privilege of serving the citizens of Maryland for another term. Many of you shared your concerns and passions on a variety of important issues facing us in the General Assembly this year. I tried to keep up-to-date on your emails and calls, and to respond to as many as possible. Following are some of the highlights:

Overriding the Governor's vetoes on some of our high priority legislation

- ✓ **Senate Bill 128 - *Community Control of School Calendars*** - This legislation allows county boards of education to choose the start and end dates for the school year. This bill also allows schools to extend the year without seeking special waivers from the State board. Local boards of education need flexibility to craft a school calendar that meets the specific needs of that jurisdiction. Under Governor Hogan's Executive Order, local boards had a difficult time accommodating snow days, teacher training days, and religious and secular holidays. Education policy is too important to be changed via Executive Order. Because the Governor has threatened to try to petition this legislation to the ballot, this bill also includes language for a potential ballot question.

- ✓ **House Bill 166 - *Labor and Employment - Payment of Wages - Minimum Wage (Fight for Fifteen)***
By overriding the Governor's veto, we assured that a 48% increase in our minimum wage to \$15 will go into effect by January 1, 2025 (with a longer phase in for employers with 14 or fewer employees).

- ✓ **House Bill 298 - *Protecting the Oyster Population in the Chesapeake*** - Our oyster population in the Chesapeake Bay is at an all-time low - just 1% of historic levels. This legislation will permanently protect and restore five oyster sanctuaries by making them off limits to oyster harvesting.

BUDGET

The General Assembly passed a bipartisan balanced budget that will fund our priorities without raising taxes for the people of Maryland.

Of special importance are the following:

- ✓ **\$7 Billion for the *Blueprint for Maryland's Future* (a.k.a. The Kirwan Commission Report)**
 - \$133 Million additional funding for special education
 - \$75 Million to increase teachers' salaries
 - \$54 Million for schools in areas of concentrated poverty
 - \$29 Million full-day pre-K for low income families
 - \$234 Million to help children who are falling behind in elementary school
 - Direct aid to schools increases by \$501 Million
 - Caps in-state tuition increases at higher education institutions at 2%
 - Funding for colleges and universities increases by 7%

- ✓ **Public Health**
 - \$11.3 Billion in the State's Medicaid Program
 - \$80 Million additional funding to fight the opioid crisis
 - 3% rate increase for behavioral and mental health providers
 - 3.5% rate increase for providers serving the developmentally disabled

- ✓ **State Employees & Public Safety**
 - 3% salary increase
 - 5% salary increase to law enforcement officers
 - 10% salary increase for correctional officers between December 2018 and July 2019
 - \$700 - \$1,000 one-time bonus for lowest paid State workers
 - \$4 Million for a new rape kit testing fund
 - \$8 Million for Baltimore City crime initiatives

I had several important legislative successes of interest

- ✓ **House Bill 735 – Protecting Maryland’s forests** - After several years of sponsoring legislation to assess the ongoing forest loss in our state, this bill is the culmination of my efforts to require a diverse group of stakeholders to study and review changes in forest cover and tree canopy throughout Maryland. By December 1, 2019, the results of the study must be reported to the Governor and the General Assembly.
- ✓ **House Bill 1282 – Guarding against impulsive purchases and land swaps by the Governor** Fueled by the concern over the Governor’s interest in acquiring land from the Federal Government for a stadium and to expand the BW Parkway, I sponsored this legislation to protect the interests of the State by providing additional legislative oversight. This bill became a priority of the House of Delegates, but failed to make it through the Senate by the end of the 2019 Session. I plan to re-introduce it next year.
- ✓ **House Bill 560 – Best Practices for Traffic Calming** – This bill requires the State Highway Administration to compile best practices for constructing and maintaining traffic calming devices throughout the State, and to assist local governments in choosing appropriate devices such as speed bumps, raised crosswalks, and traffic circles.

Other notable legislation during the 2019 Session

- ✓ **Senate Bill 516 – The Maryland Clean Energy Jobs Act** - I have always been a proponent of clean, renewable energy legislation. During last year’s Session, I was a co-sponsor of the Clean Energy Jobs Act of 2018. The 2019 legislation requires the state to get 50% of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030. This is an increase from 25% that was required by 2022.
- ✓ **House Bill 109 – Maryland is the first state to ban foam food containers - Ban on polystyrene foam (often called Styrofoam)** - Beginning July 1, 2020, the use of polystyrene foam in carry-out containers and cups will be banned in the State of Maryland. The law also impacts restaurants, cafes, supermarkets, vending trucks, carts, movie theaters, K-12 schools and colleges. The ban also includes egg cartons, vegetable trays and plates. Prince George’s county already has a similar ban in place.

- ✓ **House Bill 1096 – Sexual assault evidence kits** – This bill protects victims of sexual assault. It requires that law enforcement submit a rape kit to a forensic laboratory within 30 days, and requires an independent review process for any rejected evidence kit.

- ✓ **House Bill 697 – Protecting the Affordable Care Act** – In the event that the Supreme Court overturns protections provided by the Affordable Care Act, this legislation protects Marylanders with pre-existing conditions. It also renews the Maryland Health Insurance Protection Commission for an additional three years.

- ✓ **House Bill 338 – Summer SNAP for Children Act** – This bill creates a summer SNAP program for children, which will help feed hungry kids. Kids who are eligible for free and reduced priced meals at schools summer and winter break are eligible for this program, which will help to ensure they're getting nutritious meals whether or not school is in session.

- ✓ **House Bill 1169 - Tobacco 21 – Sales to under 21 years old prohibited** - This bill, a priority of the Legislative Black Caucus, will ban retailers from selling a tobacco product to anyone under the age of 21. The legislation requires retailers to post this age restriction in their stores. This will help to keep these addictive products out of high schools, and reduce teen smoking and addiction. In 2016, I sponsored similar legislation to raise the minimum age to purchase and use tobacco products or paraphernalia and electronic smoking devices from age 18 to 21. I am very glad to see this legislation pass in the 2019 Session.

- ✓ **House Bill 124 – Protecting Minors from Artificial Tanning Devices** - This bill prohibits a tanning facility from allowing a minor under the age of 18 to use a tanning device. The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) must develop and make available to each tanning facility a notice that contains specified information. An owner, employee, or operator must post the notice in a conspicuous place in the facility. In 2008, I proposed this legislation. At the time, the best we could do was to establish a very tough parental consent law.

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

Prince George's County will receive \$1.5 Billion in State aid in 2020, an increase of \$92.5 Million, including the following:

- ✓ **Education** – Prince George's County Schools will receive \$1.2 Billion in State direct aid – almost \$80 Million more than last year.

- ✓ **Other Aid Programs** –
 - The county library system will receive \$7.6 Million for operations.
 - Our Prince George's Community College will receive \$33.9 Million.
 - Police protection, fire, and rescue aid will total \$21.6 Million, including \$5 Million in targeted crime prevention grants.
 - Local highway and other transportation grants for Prince George's County will total \$15.3 Million, with municipalities receiving \$7.8 Million of this.
 - Gaming impact aid related to the MGM casino will total \$27.5 Million, and disparity grant funding will total \$36.2 Million.
 - State aid for public health services in the county will total \$6.7 Million.
 - Prince George's County will receive \$8.8 Million in Program Open Space funding for park acquisition and development
 - \$3.1 Million for high school athletic facilities
 - \$325,000 for community parks and playgrounds.
 - \$6.9 Million for the Chesapeake Bay and waterway improvements.

- ✓ **District 22 will see State assistance for the following capital projects** - Greenbelt Consumer Cooperative, \$350,000; University Park Town Hall, \$200,000; VFW Free State Post 8950 Aquaculture \$250,000.

On a personal note, I must say that the 2019 Session was challenging in unexpected ways. Most significant was the death of the Speaker of the House of Delegates. Del. Michael Busch had been a beloved leader at the House for 16 years. His passing on the day before the Session ended was a blow to all of us. He was a great, progressive leader and will be sorely missed.

With your help and support, we will face future challenges together. I encourage you to stay in contact with me, and I will continue do my best for you.

Additional information and details may be found on the Maryland General Assembly website:
<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frm1st.aspx?tab=home>

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