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Economic Matters Committee

Subcommittees

Banking, Consumer Protection,
and Commercial Law

Property and Casualty Insurance

Vice Chair, Democratic Caucus



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

End of Session Letter
2022 Maryland General Assembly Regular Session
April 20, 2022

That's a wrap! I have concluded the last of four annual legislative sessions of my first term as your state delegate. The 2022 Legislative Session was an unprecedented win for Ellicott City. Senator Katie Fry Hester and I were able to secure **more than \$16 million for Historic Ellicott City** in the FY23 State Capital Budget. The total amount of state funding we have received in the past four years is \$37,896,230. What is even more exciting is that these funds will be used to leverage federal matching funds from a variety of federal programs.

We also passed some key legislation including the **Time to Care Act** which will initiate the process for a Family Leave Program in Maryland by 2024, as well as the **Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022** that will reduce greenhouse gases and meet the goal of net-zero statewide emissions by 2045. We provided **tax relief for seniors** as well as a **gas tax holiday**, and a sales tax exemption on specified items for families.

Finally, I am proud to say that I had four bills pass both the House and the Senate unanimously. It's not a small feat to get each of the 141 members of the house and the 47 members of the senate to agree with me on four different bills!

There were 836 bills passed by the Maryland General Assembly in 2022 out of nearly 2,500 bills filed. I have pulled a short list for your review. As always, please contact my office with questions about any of the bills mentioned here or any others on which you would like more information. The Department of Legislative Services publishes the **90-Day Report**, a review of the 2022 session. It is available online at <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/Pubs/LegisLegal/2022rs-90-day-report.pdf>.

SUPPORT FOR ELLICOTT CITY IN FY2023

This year's budget includes record funding for projects in the Ellicott City Safe and Sound Flood Mitigation Plan including \$12,000,000 for the Extended North Tunnel, \$2,000,000 for the T1 Pond, and \$1,000,000 for the Maryland Avenue Culvert. Additionally, \$250,000 is included for the placement of wayfinding signs to direct visitors to Main Street and \$175,000 for drop arm barriers that can be used in times of emergency. This year's funding also includes \$300,000 to begin the historic Barnard Fort House design and restoration in historic Ellicott City and \$500,000 to rehabilitate the Ellicott City Jail. What's more, \$200,000 was approved for playground improvements to Centennial Park West.

PASSED SPONSORED LEGISLATION

- **[HB 4](#): Unemployment Insurance – Recovery of Benefits – Refund of Payments**
This bill establishes the process that the Secretary of Labor must follow when recovering benefits from an unemployment insurance (UI) claimant and the claimant notifies the Secretary that the actual amount recovered exceeded the amount stated in the notice of repayment received by the claimant. The bill also requires the Secretary to submit a monthly report to the General Assembly with information about these claims. The Secretary must adopt regulations to implement the bill.
- **[HB 40](#): Condominiums - Disclosures to Unit Owners and Prohibited Provisions in Instruments**
This bill clarifies that a board of directors of a condominium may not withhold or agree to withhold from the unit owners the terms of any legal agreements to which the council of unit owners is a party. The bill also (1) alters the circumstances under which provisions within specified instruments are unenforceable and (2) establishes enhanced disclosure requirements, including those applicable to a unit owner in contracts for the sale of a condominium unit.
- **[HB 550](#) / [SB476](#): Alcoholic Beverages - Manufacturer's Licenses and Off-Site Permits - Sunset Extension**
This bill extends the termination date of provisions related to the sale and delivery of alcoholic beverages by certain alcoholic beverages manufacturers from December 31, 2022, to June 30, 2023. The bill also repeals the termination date of provisions related to alcoholic beverages manufacturers event permits, fees, and production limits. The bill also limits the sale of beer at authorized events by specified beer manufacturers to up to 288 ounces of beer sold to each consumer for off-premises consumption.
- **[HB 1312](#) / [SB 814](#): Public Safety – Resilient Maryland Revolving Loan Fund – Alterations**
This bill authorizes the Resilient Maryland Revolving Loan Fund within the Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM) to issue low- and no-interest loans to local governments for the purpose of offering loan funds to private property owners for hazard mitigation projects. Money in the fund may be used to administer and manage the fund. Local governments providing loans to private property owners are authorized to establish a specified graduated loan forgiveness program. In addition to established funding sources, the fund may include money received from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

SELECTED STATEWIDE LEGISLATION BY TOPIC

BUDGET

- **[SB 290](#): FY 23 State Operating Budget**
The State's FY 23 Operating Budget passed with a record \$2.4B in the Rainy Day Fund for emergencies and provides more than \$650M to fund the General Assembly's

legislative priorities like education, support for Marylanders with the greatest need, employee benefits and cost of living increases for state employees. The budget includes:

- \$800M set aside for future Blueprint education funding
 - Over \$50M in help for families to afford child care
 - An increase of nearly \$150M in funding for crime prevention and victim services
 - Over \$100M in funds to create more affordable rental housing
 - \$202M for providers serving vulnerable populations
 - \$35M toward benefits for cash assistance recipients
 - \$27M to expand Medicaid dental benefits for adults
 - \$50M for grants for arts and tourism organizations
 - Implementation of cannabis reform (\$47 million)
 - \$30M provided to serve 1,350 youth on the Autism Waiver waiting list
 - \$9M to address climate impacts
 - \$10M to launch paid family leave
 - \$36 million to support economic development and revitalization efforts
- **[SB 291: FY 23 State Capital Budget](#)**

This year’s capital budget is one of the largest in State history. Working with the Administration to target spending toward one-time infrastructure investment, the capital budget provides \$1.5 billion in funding for our most important priorities, including \$50 million for legislative bond initiatives. The General Assembly also pre authorized funding for nearly \$600 million for projects in future years.

CANNABIS / CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

- **[HB 1: Legal Cannabis Constitutional Amendment](#)**
- **[HB 837: Cannabis Reform](#)**

House Bill 1 puts a referendum for legalized cannabis on the 2022 General Election ballot. It would allow individuals 21 or older to use and possess cannabis.

House Bill 837 addresses criminal justice and public health issues facing legalization while building the necessary foundation to create social equity in the recreational cannabis industry. It allows Marylanders to possess up to 1.5 ounces of recreational cannabis without penalty and automatically expunges the conviction of anyone previously found guilty of simple possession of marijuana.

CHILDCARE

- **[HB 89: Child Care Stabilization and Child Care Expansion Grant Programs](#)**

House Bill 89 prioritizes family child care providers and providers most in need for the State’s \$50 million stabilization grant. This legislation will allow family child care providers and providers most in need a better opportunity to take advantage of the grant this fiscal year.
- **[HB 725: Therapeutic Child Care Program](#)**

House Bill 725 establishes the Therapeutic Child Care Program for childcare providers that support students with developmental disabilities. The grant program provides up to \$45k for each child with severe developmental disabilities or delays.

CYBERSECURITY

- **[HB 1202](#): Local Cybersecurity Support Act of 2022**
House Bill 1202 codifies the Cyber Preparedness Unit Emergency under the Department of Emergency Management (MDEM) to assist local governments to be prepared for and respond to security hack and other incidents. It requires local governments to report cyber security incidents to the local emergency manager, security operations center in the Maryland Department of Information Technology (DoIT), and the Maryland Joint Operations Center.
- **[HB 1205](#): Modernize Maryland Act of 2022**
House Bill 1205 creates an oversight commission consisting of experts in cybersecurity, legislators, industry leaders. It also includes a “fee for service” grant program provided at-cost by the state, to assess local governments cyber infrastructure and make grants available to jurisdictions who take advantage of the program. This legislation also requires DoIT to conduct an audit of state cybersecurity infrastructure at least every three years with assistance of hired outside consultants to provide insight into overall system security and identify deficiencies and areas for improvement.
- **[HB 1346](#): Improving State Cybersecurity Coordination and Governance**
House Bill 1346 centralizes state cybersecurity operations inside the Maryland Department of Information Technology (DoIT). The bill also codifies the Office of Security Management and the Chief Information Security Officer positions originally outlined in the Governor’s Executive Order.

The bill also establishes the Cybersecurity Coordination and Operations Unit (CCOU) inside DoIT as a body to coordinate local efforts and support services to improve local, regional, and statewide cyber security readiness and response. This will serve as a place for locals to go for resources to improve their own cyber security efforts.

EDUCATION

- **[HB 734](#): Maryland Student Investment Act**
House Bill 734 expands access to higher education. It makes college more affordable for Maryland students by increasing funding to the State’s financial aid programs. It also improves the Guaranteed Access Grant so that grant recipients who become ineligible due to an income change will remain eligible for the full award under certain conditions.
- **[HB 1163](#): Virtual Education**
House Bill 1163 equips the state for high-quality virtual education when a transition to remote learning is required. It requires the Department of Education to study best practices for virtual education and develop criteria for the establishment of virtual schools. The bill also requires local school boards to have a plan in place should they need to transition to virtual education for an extended period of time.
- **[HB 1450](#): Blueprint Implementation Updates**
House Bill 1450 adjusts the Blueprint’s implementation plan to better align with the formation of the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB). The bill extends the dates for when the AIB must adopt a Comprehensive Implementation Plan (CIP) for the

Blueprint and extends the dates for when the plans should be approved. The bill also dedicates a certain percentage of sales and use tax revenues to the Blueprint's funding.

ENVIRONMENT

- **[SB 528](#): Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022**

As amended by the House, this landmark legislation strengthens Maryland's commitment to mitigating the effects of climate change by setting achievable goals to reduce greenhouse gases and meet the goal of net-zero statewide emissions by 2045.

This bill is the result of nearly a year's worth of work by legislative leaders and advocacy organizations and it continues to prove that Maryland is a national leader when it comes to addressing climate change.

- **[SB 541](#): The Great Maryland Outdoors Act**

Senate Bill 541 provides better support to the Maryland Park Service and makes critical improvements based on the recommendations by the State Parks Investment Commission. During the pandemic, patronage to Maryland's state parks increased by 45%; parks were unable to support the increased capacity because of decades of underfunding. This bill corrects decades of underfunding by providing nearly \$68M to address backlogged maintenance projects and repairs and new land acquisition to expand parks for better public access, historic preservation, flood mitigation and enhanced staffing. It also includes \$20M for transportation improvements, parking availability and trail connectivity. Additionally, the bill leverages power between county and state parks for better partnerships to create a pipeline to hire and retain diverse staff, improve oversight to the park system and promote our state parks so every Marylander has access to their state parks.

- **[HB 649](#): "Zombie" Permit Ban**

House Bill 649 gives the Maryland Department of the Environment the tools to improve the water pollution inspection process and end "zombie" permits - water discharge permits that have expired but continue to be used. This will prevent water pollution, will ensure the safety of the state's drinking water system and will prevent water contamination issues seen in Flint, Michigan.

- **[HB 696](#): Electric School Bus Pilot Program**

House Bill 696 establishes a 3-year electric school bus pilot program to begin transitioning Maryland's 7,300 school buses from diesel to electric buses.

- **[HB 1391](#): Clean Cars Act of 2022**

House Bill 1391 extends the Clean Cars program for zero emission and fuel cell electric vehicles that cost \$50,000 or less for the next four years. Additionally, the bill creates a medium-duty and heavy-duty zero-emission vehicle program to begin to help reduce the cost, up to 20%, for electric trucks and other heavy machinery such as forklifts. This bill is another important step in the right direction to reduce pollution and carbon emissions.

GOVERNMENT

- **[HB 1088](#): African American Heritage Preservation Program Funding**
House Bill 1088 provides the program with \$4 million in new funding to preserve more sites in Maryland that are significant to African American history, culture and heritage. The program is one of only two grant programs in the nation that is solely dedicated to funding African American heritage sites.
- **[HB 496](#): Commission to Implement Family and Medical Leave**
House Bill 496 lays the foundation for the implementation of paid family and medical leave by 2024. The House Appropriations Committee set aside more than \$20 million in the budget to start building the program's framework beginning in July.
- **[HJ 8](#): Solidarity with the Government and People of Ukraine**
House Joint Resolution 8 declares that the State stands in solidarity with the government and people of Ukraine as they resist the unprovoked invasion of their territory by the Russian Federation; and that the General Assembly of Maryland encourages all Marylanders to assist as they are able in providing humanitarian assistance to the people of Ukraine affected by this conflict. It is the duty of all free peoples to resist tyranny, whatever form it may take.

HEALTH

- **[SB 353](#): Insulin Cost Reduction Act**
Senate Bill 353 Limits the total amount of cost share for insulin for individuals with health insurance plans. Puts a cap on the cost of insulin to \$30. Requires an insurer, nonprofit health service plan, or health maintenance organization (collectively known as carriers) that provides coverage for prescription drugs and devices (including coverage provided through a pharmacy benefits manager) to limit the amount a covered individual is required to pay in copayments or coinsurance for a covered prescription insulin drug to no more than \$30 for a 30-day supply.

LABOR

- **[SB 275](#): Time to Care Act of 2022**
Senate Bill 275 establishes the Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) Fund to provide up to 12 weeks of benefits to covered workers who need to take extended time away from work to care for themselves or a loved one. This will allow workers to take paid time off for events like the birth or adoption of a child, caring for an aging family member or caring for themselves during a medical emergency without having to endure hardship.

PUBLIC SAFETY

- **[HB 425](#): Ghost Gun Ban**
House Bill 425 bans unregistered, untraceable 'ghost guns' and creates a plan for a system to register guns that can be sold in kits of loose parts and do not have a serial number.

- **[HB 1021](#): Enhanced Security Requirements for Licensed Firearms Dealer Shops**
House Bill 1021 requires firearm dealers to put common sense security features like video cameras, burglary systems and safes in their shops to prevent stolen firearms. These enhanced security measures will prevent stolen firearms from going on the black market and being used to commit crimes.

TAXES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- **[HB 2](#): Work Opportunity Tax Credit**
House Bill 2 helps put chronically unemployed Marylanders back to work by providing a tax credit to businesses that hire and retain workers from underrepresented communities.
- **[HB 282](#): Sales Tax Exemption on Diapers**
House Bill 282 cuts the sales tax on diapers to help make these items more affordable for Maryland families.
- **[HB 288](#): Sales Tax Exemption on Baby Products**
House Bill 288 helps families afford basic necessities by cutting the sales tax on baby products including car seats, baby bottles and bottle nipples.
- **[HB 364](#): Sales Tax Exemption on Medical Devices**
House Bill 364 makes medical products more affordable by cutting the sales tax on thermometers, pulse oximeters, and blood pressure monitors – critical for the 1.5 million Marylanders with high blood pressure.
- **[HB 492](#): Sales Tax Exemption on Oral Hygiene Products**
House Bill 492 helps families afford everyday household items by cutting the sales tax on dental hygiene products like toothbrushes, toothpaste, floss and mouthwash making them more affordable and accessible.
- **[HB 1151](#): Sales Tax Exemption on Diabetic Care Products**
House Bill 1151 makes diabetic care products more affordable for the 700K Marylanders with diabetes. It cuts the sales tax on products like testing strips, insulin pumps and glucose monitors.

Thank you for your interest in my work in the House of Delegates. It is an honor to represent you in Annapolis. Please join me and **Senator Katie Fry Hester** for our VIRTUAL “**Summing Up the Session**” Town Hall on **May 4, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.** Register at <https://bit.ly/37m7LwO> or email us at Courtney.Watson@house.state.md.us to get your Zoom link.

Throughout the year, if you need assistance or would like to discuss potential legislation or provide feedback, please contact me or my **Chief of Staff, Terry Chaconas**. I look forward to seeing you this summer as we celebrate Ellicott City’s 250th anniversary (EC250)!

Stay well,

Courtney Watson