



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

April 2019

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

My first legislative session in Annapolis has concluded, and I am now back working and living in Baltimore. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to represent you as your State Delegate.

Remembering our Speaker

It was an honor to call Michael E. Busch, Mr. Speaker, a friend, colleague, and leader for my first 89 days as a Delegate; though he led Maryland for years before I came to Annapolis. It was a privilege to watch and learn from him in his final session, to be appointed to his Opioid Workgroup, and to bear witness to a small part of his legacy. As the longest serving Speaker in the history of the State, Speaker Busch is known for his commitment to sports, arts, and parks; but advocates of health care, education, and the City of Baltimore will tell you that he shared their priorities as well. His fairness and leadership were unmatched. I offer my sincere condolences to his family on this tremendous loss.

2019 End of Session Report

Despite the somber ending, my first session was very successful. I am proud to have voted on and passed a wide variety of legislation. An important lesson that I learned first-hand during my freshman year is that some good bills evolve, undergo compromising amendments, pass out of one chamber, and yet still fail to become law. Some bills take years to receive bipartisan support in both chambers. While I await my interim assignments and prepare to continue working the bills that just fell short, let's reflect on the successful ones.

I was 1 of 43 new members of the House of Delegates and 17 new Senators, with historic levels of diversity. I served on the Environment and Transportation Committee and was a member of the Housing and Real Property Subcommittee and the Land Use and Ethics Subcommittee. I was appointed to the Speaker's Opioid Workgroup and worked alongside our neighbors in the Baltimore City Delegation.

Below is a brief summary of some of the legislation we worked on this session.

Fiscal Year 2020 Budget

A historic budget passed for Fiscal Year 2020, with two female legislators leading the conference committee. The General Assembly is given a budget by the Governor and may only cut from it. Then, it has to be agreed upon by both Chambers. This year, a record high was given to public education. Spending increased by 3.31%, which falls under the 3.75% cap. The operating budget is \$118.2 million with \$26 million in structural surplus for fiscal year 2020 and \$1.1 billion in the Rainy Day Fund. For the fifth consecutive year, there are no new State taxes. State employees will receive a 3% **cost of living adjustment**, law enforcement will receive 5%, and correctional officers 6%. It ruled out more than \$280 million in tax cuts aimed at retiree's income, including a \$91 million reduction in taxes for veterans.

The Governor proposed a \$13 million initiative to **fight violent crime** in Baltimore, which received full funding. The 2020 budget also provided funds for expanding the testing of rape kits and upgrading technology at the Baltimore Police Department.

Maryland is working toward closing large achievement gaps based on race, income, and disability in the **public education** system with the recommendations from the newly instituted Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education, better known as **The Kirwan Commission**. This legislation calls for free full-day kindergarten for low-income 3- and 4-year olds, raising salaries for teachers, and increasing program funding for students with disabilities. Its primary goal is to adequately prepare all students for careers or college.

House Bill 166, better known as the **Fight for 15**, implements a \$15 minimum wage in annual steps by January 1, 2025. There are exemptions for companies with less than 15 employees, agricultural workers, and tipped employees. There is also an opportunity for a one-time pause, in case there are negative reports on the economy. 22% of our State’s workforce – more than 573,000 working Marylanders – would get a pay raise; and nearly 273,000 Maryland children will benefit from an increased family income.

Craft Breweries are a great source of revenue and employment for Maryland and are growing more popular in the City. The **Brewery Modernization Act** updates Maryland beer laws to now allow for increased taproom sales, production capabilities, self-distribution limits, and hours of operation for the craft beer industry.

Financial Protections

In the event of future government shutdowns, the **Federal Shutdown Protection Act** allows civilian federal employees to receive unemployment benefits and alters the Catastrophic Event Account to respond to such an incident.

Tax sales disproportionately harm low-income people, senior citizens, and people of color. Tax sale foreclosures displace the elderly, contribute to vacancy and abandonment, and destabilize communities. The **Tax Sale Protections Act** reforms the tax sale process to protect low-income homeowners from losing their homes assessed at \$300,000 or less. It also provides an ombudsman to explain the process to homeowners and to help homeowners apply for tax credits and programs that would benefit them.

We passed the **Water Lien Bill**, which will ensure that Baltimore City residents’ homes and places of worship are not being sold by the City to enforce a lien for unpaid water bills.

Health Care

With the rising cost of health care, especially the cost of prescription drugs, the General Assembly made two initiatives to restore benefits to retired State employees and protect all residents. We are the first state to guarantee **reproductive health coverage** regardless of the federal government revisions to Title X program.

Local Funding

With the other members of the 41st District, we secured \$675,000 in state funding for local projects.

The Capital Budget subcommittee of the Appropriations committee hears all project proposals and our recommendations.

They voted to give funding to:

- Belvedere Place;
- Cylburn Arboretum Carriage House and Nature Museum;
- Edward A. Myerberg Senior Center;
- Gatehouse Community Resource Center;
- Roland Park Water Tower; and
- Wayland Village II.

Constituent Work

It was wonderful keeping in touch with so many friends from the campaign and making new ones via phone calls and emails during session. I enjoyed getting to know you through our shared concerns, and I look forward to seeing you in the community this year.

As a district, your top concerns were:

- fully funding public schools;
- combatting climate change;
- guaranteeing quality healthcare;
- raising the minimum wage; and
- safeguarding Baltimore City.

We worked to pass a compromising **Retiree Prescription Drug Benefits** plan. In addition to Medicare eligibility, Maryland has created three different plans to limit out of cost expenses. If the lawsuit is resolved in the retiree's favor, this legislation has no effect.

The first of its kind in the United States, Maryland is assembling a panel of experts to study how to limit and possibly reduce the ever rising cost of prescription medication. The **Prescription Drug Affordability Board** reports to the legislature on how to implement change for State residents.

After years of proposed legislation, leadership in the State of Maryland took two large **protective measures for youth health**. Maryland raised the minimum age to purchase tobacco to 21, unless able to present a military ID, and raised the minimum age to use tanning beds to 21. The tobacco legislation includes cigarettes, cigars, smokeless tobacco, e-cigarettes, and vaping devices.

Opioid Legislation

As many know, the opioid crisis is an epidemic that touches the lives of many of us, and this epidemic does not discriminate. I am extremely honored to have been selected by Speaker Busch to be a member of the House Opioid Workgroup. This workgroup's membership consists of bipartisan legislators working to battle this crisis. Together, we worked on a variety of legislation that will go into effect in 2019 and 2020 to further combat the opioid epidemic in Maryland. A few are highlighted below.

Prescription Drug Monitoring Program – Allows prescribing administrators access to a patient's narcotics prescription history. Additionally, it is now required that the possible misuse or abuse of the prescriber or dispenser is reported to the Office of Controlled Substances Administration for further investigation.

Opioid Restitution Fund – This bill creates a special State fund for any money received from legal judgements or settlements against an opioid manufacturer. This dedicated fund ensures money recovered from this crisis is used to fund treatment and recovery programs.

Maryland Department of Health Grant Programs – Community Mental Health, Addiction and Developmental Disabilities Capital Program will have the ability to improve the services that they offer through improving their facilities. The grant program allows for more treatment facilities, rehabilitation centers, and support for residents who want to be successful in recovery.

Correctional Services – Opioid Use Disorder Examinations and Treatment – This legislation will allow correctional facilities to rehabilitate inmates in their recovery as well. It requires correctional facilities to assess the mental health and substance abuse status of each inmate; make a diagnosis; and, if medication assisted treatment for opioid addiction is appropriate, administer the prescription.

Environment

Oysters are critical to the health of the Bay and have been overfished. The oyster population is currently estimated to be at 1% of its' historic high. The **Oyster Sanctuary Protection Act** will now protect five oyster sanctuaries in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries from overfishing.

Maryland is the first State in the union to **ban foam** food containers. This legislation will prohibit the use and sale of single-use food service polystyrene, effective July 1, 2020. Mr. Trash Wheel in the Inner Harbor has scooped up more than one million bits of foam since 2014.

The **Clean Energy Jobs Act** mandates that 50% of the State's electricity come from renewable sources, such as wind and solar power, by 2030. It creates jobs in the clean energy sector and works to combat Maryland's reliance on fossil fuels. The bill does not disqualify trash incineration as a source of renewable energy. And thus, incinerators will continue to receive subsidies.

I hope you enjoyed the highlight reel of my freshman session. I enjoyed representing the 41st District, and I look forward to seeing you all in the community. I am committed to making Baltimore City and the State of Maryland the best place to live, work and raise our families.



Stay in touch!

Please "like" my Facebook page, and sign up for my e-mail updates at www.dalyaattar.com. I can always be reached via phone (410)841-3268 or email dalya.attar@house.state.md.us

Thank you for allowing me to serve as your Delegate.

Best,

Dalya Attar