



**DELEGATE ERIC
EBERSOLE
DISTRICT 12**

**THE CONNECTION:
LEGISLATIVE
NEWSLETTER -
END OF SESSION 2018**

**PERIODIC NEWSLETTER TO KEEP YOU INFORMED AND UP
TO DATE WITH POLITICAL HAPPENINGS IN
ANNAPOLIS AND IN HOWARD AND BALTIMORE COUNTIES**



**SESSION REFLECTIONS
& ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

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Reflections and Personal Legislative Accomplishments -

Thank you for the honor and privilege of serving you as your State Delegate and representative in Annapolis. The 2018 legislative session concluded on April 9th, 2018, and it was a very productive session in many ways. A special thank you to everyone who emailed, called, wrote letters, attended town halls, or came to Annapolis to speak to me about legislation that mattered to you. This session I received 2,916 emails, dozens of letters or postcards, and hundreds of phone calls from my constituents. Your opinions and thoughts are of great value to me, and I am honored to have the task of representing your interests.

Earned Sick Leave:

My fellow legislators and I worked hard this session, and it was extremely productive, resulting in many successful bipartisan initiatives. As soon as we met in January, the legislature immediately overrode the veto of the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act, which requires companies with 15 or more employees to provide up to five days of earned sick leave annually. Companies with less than 15 employees will simply have to provide unpaid leave under the same conditions. Companies with an existing policy that exceeds the requirements may maintain their current policy. We have worked for years to create a statewide policy to provide earned leave for all working Marylanders, and I am thrilled that this well-crafted, compromise legislation will become law.

Rape Survivor Rights and Protections

Another bill that was many years in the making became law this session. The Rape Survivor Family Protection Act protects victims of sexual assault by allowing the court to remove the parental rights of their attacker. Maryland joins 30 other states by enacting this legislation, and it was passed unanimously by both chambers.

Sadly, due to many tragic events in the news, gun safety and crime was a top priority for all of us in Annapolis. We worked hard to see what we could do at the state level to increase public safety. We banned “bump stocks,” devices that allow semi-automatic rifles to function like fully automatic ones. We also passed “red flag” legislation, which allows law enforcement to confiscate firearms from a person who a judge considers to be a serious danger to themselves or others. Five states already have “red flag laws,” and studies from those states show a connection between seizing troubled individuals’ weapons and a decrease in gun deaths and suicides. This bipartisan bill passed the House with a vote of 116 to 17.

Gun Safety

Another crucial piece of gun safety legislation with near-unanimous support allows law enforcement to execute a search warrant to remove any guns from a domestic violence offender’s home if a court believes they failed to turn in their guns upon conviction. Keeping weapons away from violent abusers and those in a mental health crisis makes all of us safer, and I am proud of what we accomplished.

School Safety

We also unanimously passed a comprehensive school safety initiative. This wide-reaching legislation will provide \$12.5 million school safety grants for schools to evaluate and improve their safety measures. It also restructures the oversight of school safety measures and adds mental health coordinators to school systems. Finally, we passed legislation that calls for tougher penalties for those convicted repeatedly of violent gun crimes.

Education Funding and Policy

Education funding was another top priority this session, and I was thrilled to help pass the Fix the Fund Act. This bill creates a constitutional amendment that would put all casino revenue in a lockbox for education

spending- which means that the funds cannot be used on any other budget items. Constitutional amendments are decided as referendum questions, so you will see this measure on the ballot in November.

Additionally, the General Assembly overrode the Governor's veto to provide \$400 million in school construction and an additional \$10 million in school safety funding. The Knott Commission's recommendations are the results of a bipartisan group of construction experts, business leaders, and local officials. This legislation also transfers the responsibility of making school construction decisions to the Interagency Committee on School Construction (IAC), which will be expanded to include four appointees from the Speaker and Senate President and five appointees from the Governor. We also passed legislation that begins to implement the recommendations of the Kirwan Commission. The bill is aimed at teacher recruiting and retention, implementing career and technical training for students, and creates an Early Literacy Program in low-income areas.

Opioid Control and Addiction Treatment

The General Assembly also passed two bills aimed at curbing the opioid epidemic. The first establishes a competitive grant program that awards funding to local behavioral health organizations to expand capabilities of crisis response programs and services. The second bill requires pharmacies to report suspicious orders to the Attorney General's office; an order might be considered suspicious if it is abnormally large or shipping at an unusual frequency. Hopefully, these two programs will help end this public health crisis that is impacting people all across our state.

Taxes and the New Federal Laws

When we convened in January, the recently passed federal tax bill was of significant concern. We wanted to ensure that the new policies would not adversely affect Marylanders, and to that end we made two large changes to Maryland tax policy. First, we ensured that Marylanders could continue to take personal exemptions on their state tax returns, even though they were eliminated at the federal level. Second, we increased the standard deduction for all Marylanders, and to account for inflation, these bills will increase the standard deduction every single year moving forward. We will continue to monitor the effect that the federal changes to the tax code have on Marylanders and work to make sure that they do not cause your tax burden to rise.

Net Neutrality

Another federal change that concerned us in Annapolis was the repeal of net neutrality laws. I co-sponsored legislation that would have preserved net neutrality in Maryland. While this bill passed the house, it did not move in the senate and did not become law this year. I hope to see similar legislation in next year's session to protect Maryland consumers from the potential effects of the net neutrality repeal.

The Environment

Changes at the federal level also prompted us to act on environmental issues. We passed legislation to join the U.S. Climate Alliance, which is a group of states that have committed to greenhouse gas reduction goals. We also moved to protect Maryland's waters and coastline businesses, with legislation establishing that a person that causes an oil or gas spill while engaged in offshore drilling activity is strictly liable for damages.

Elections and Registration

The legislature also made significant strides in election and campaign laws. We passed an automatic voter registration bill, which automatically registers Marylanders to vote while they are renewing a driver's license, signing up for health coverage with the state Health Benefit Exchange, or receiving help from a social service

agency. If the individual does not wish to register, they may opt out during the process. The General Assembly also passed a constitutional amendment to allow voters to register to vote and vote on election day, another referendum issue that you will see on the ballot in November. Maryland was the first state in the country to pass legislation requiring social media and websites to track and disclose political ads. These online companies must keep data that can be used to investigate foreign interference or illegal spending in State races.

Conversion Therapy

Other significant legislative accomplishments included a ban on “conversion therapy” for minors. The bill bans state-licensed mental health, health care and child care practitioners from practicing conversion therapy to change the gender identification or sexual orientation of a minor. Conversion therapy has been proven to cause depression and even result in suicide, and I am grateful that we are protecting Maryland’s children from this practice.

Protecting Our Pets

I heard from many constituents about another bill that we successfully passed, the “No More Puppy and Kitten Mills Act of 2018.” This bill bans retail stores from selling pets from unethical puppy mills. Instead, retail stores will be required to sell only animals that are rescued or that have been purchased from licensed breeders. This law will help animals and consumers, and I was glad to see it succeed.

Personal Legislation

This fourth and final year of my first term was one of my most successful. I sponsored several bills that will become law, and am grateful to my colleagues for their votes. One of the pieces of legislation I am most proud of is one to add vital stakeholders to the state board of education; this bill, cross-filed with Senator Madaleno, adds a parent and two teachers to the state board.

I also passed a bill that helps add flexibility in the proctoring of high-stakes testing like PARCC. This legislation lets a principal designate a school employee of their choice, such as a para-educator, to proctor these exams, instead of pulling a classroom teacher out of their class to proctor a test. Standardized testing can have school-wide impacts, even on the students who are not being tested, and this new law will help to reduce testing-related disruption in schools.

I also introduced several bills that did not pass this session, and that I am committed to re-introducing next session. One of my priorities for next year is a bill that would add training in the detection and reporting of human trafficking to Maryland’s commercial driver’s licenses. Human trafficking is a heinous crime, and similar programs in other states have been of great assistance to law enforcement. Our truck drivers are the eyes and ears of Maryland’s highways and I look forward to passing legislation to give them the tools to spot these criminals.

Local Initiatives

I was very pleased with the outcomes of the bond bills for capital improvements that I sponsored with Senator Kasemeyer and Delegates Hill and Lam. Together, we helped the Lansdowne Volunteer Fire Department secure \$100,000 in bond funding. We also secured funding for Vehicles for Change in Halethorpe to help them continue the good work they do. In Howard County, the county delegation worked together to secure bond funding for the following projects: Harriet Tubman Community Center and Museum, the Ellicott City Public Arts Project, the PHILLIPS School, the Lisbon Volunteer Fire Department and the Howard County Youth Program.

Thanks again for your support and participation over the last 90 days. I am already eagerly looking forward to my next term. As always, I hope that you will share your concerns and ideas with me. Please, stay in touch.



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