



MARYLAND
HOUSE OF DELEGATES



ERIC
EBERSOLE
MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
DISTRICT 12

THE CONNECTION

Annapolis

Howard and Baltimore Counties

A PERIODIC NEWSLETTER TO
KEEP YOU UP TO DATE

CROSSOVER 2021 NEWSLETTER

CROSSOVER 2021
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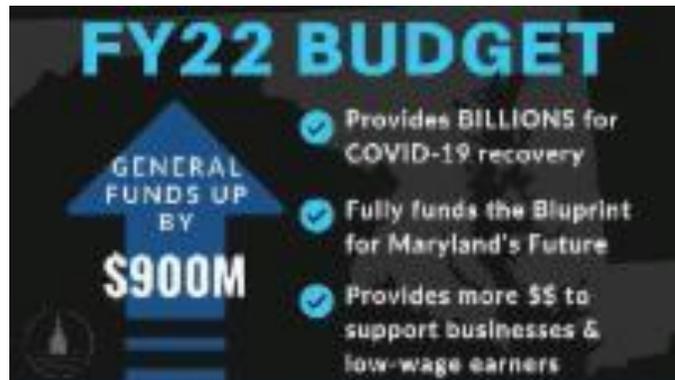
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We just made it to "crossover."

This is the point in the session where each house must send their bills to the other to get them properly considered and then, hopefully, passed on to the Governor for consideration. Here is a small sample of some of the great measures we passed.

THE BUDGET!

I was very proud to vote for the state budget bill in the full House of Delegates last week- the result of many hours of good and hard work. This is the one thing we must do each session as mandated by the State Constitution - pass a balanced budget. Some years budgets are tough as they require some very difficult decisions, but this one was well written and careful on spending while taking advantage of a good fiscal outlook.



The budget achieves structural balance, as general fund revenues exceed expenditures by \$158 million in FY2022, and it sets up a structural surplus of \$262 million by FY2026. More than \$1.8 billion in cash resources are preserved, including \$1.1 billion in the Rainy Day Fund. The cash balance at the close of Fiscal 2022 is more than enough to erase the projected fiscal 2023 budget shortfall. We have funded our priorities and responded to the COVID-19 emergency with \$687 million of State spending and \$585 of target tax relief to support Maryland's recovery. We maintain our commitment to public schools and increase direct aid to local school systems. The budget also restores \$616 million of reductions proposed by the Governor and earmarks \$6.7 million for legislative priorities not funded in the budget. Funding restorations include \$422 million for the Rainy Day Fund, \$29.8 million for independent colleges and universities, \$26.6 million for community colleges, and \$50 million to reduce unfunded pension and retiree health liabilities. Funds are also restored for Maryland Public Television, the Office of the Attorney General, Medicaid to mitigate the need to raise the hospital deficit assessment, and the State Department of Assessments -- and Taxation to prevent an increase in charges to local governments.

BLUEPRINT BILL UPDATED TO ADDRESS COVID LEARNING LOSS



As I reported in a previous newsletter, the General Assembly overrode the governor's veto of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, our bill providing landmark education reforms to provide all of Maryland's students with a world class education. The pandemic has only served to deepen existing

challenges and disparities in our education system, while creating new ones due to the digital divide and the unprecedented challenges brought on by learning loss incurred this past year. In response, we passed [HB1372](#) to adjust the Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation in order to address the digital divide, reverse COVID-19 learning loss, support our students' socio-emotional health, and make technical and financial changes necessary due to COVID and the Blueprint's delayed implementation. These specific and targeted proposals are necessary to rebuild from the impacts of the pandemic.

ELECTRIC SCHOOL BUS PILOT PROGRAM

As a continuing advocate for long term changes to mitigate climate change, I am so pleased that last night we passed [HB 832](#) - Public Utilities – Electric School Bus Pilot Program. This bill establishes the Electric School Bus Pilot Program to help the state transition our diesel powered school buses to an electric fleet. The utilities will make the electric school buses the same cost as a diesel bus, and over time, electric buses will be far less costly than diesel buses. This an important step in reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and meeting our overall clean energy goals. In the future they may even be equipped to produce energy from solar while they are in their parking lot!



Plastic Bag Ban

In 2019, 50% of the bags we used ended up in landfills. Nothing we use for a few minutes should threaten our health and pollute our planet for hundreds of years. [HB314](#) prohibits retail businesses from offering “single-use plastic carryout bags” in Maryland. This is legislation that is overdue and I am happy to have supported it and help pass it to the Senate.



RENTERS IN NEED OF PROTECTION IN COVID EMERGENCY

Affirmative Defense Catastrophic Health Emergency Rent Increase & Fine Freeze

This emergency legislation will strengthen Governor's executive order which created an affirmative defense for failure to pay rent by allowing tenants to use the defense up to six months after the COVID-19 state of emergency has ended. Tenants will be required to show the court that they suffered a substantial loss of income due to the pandemic. This includes job loss, reduction in work hours, or need to miss work to care for a home-bound student. The effects of the pandemic will last for months after this crisis. While the state of emergency may end, the economic effects on Marylanders will continue. This bill also codifies this affirmative defense in the event there is another catastrophic health emergency. It also stops landlords from increasing rent or tacking on fees during the duration of the crisis.

Financial Help for Landlords and Renters

Maryland has received \$401 million in federal rental relief which will benefit every county in Maryland. The federal funding will be distributed to the Department of Housing and Community Development and in direct grants to some of the largest jurisdictions. On April 1st counties are required to have grant applications and program plans submitted. By April 15th county plans will be approved and grant agreements executed with advance payments will be made to eligible grantees.

Once counties begin to receive funds, they will be able to execute assistance programs and process individual landlord and/or tenant applications.

Residential Tenants - Right to Counsel

The House took a historic step by passing legislation for Maryland to become the first state in the country to grant tenants a right to counsel in specific eviction cases. Under this legislation, tenants who make 50% or less of the state median income will be granted a lawyer to argue defenses in eviction cases, including but not limited to, retaliatory actions landlords, rent escrow disputes, and lead hazards.

COVID VACCINE UPDATE

2A

WHO: Marylanders age 60 and older

WHEN: March 23

2B

WHO: Marylanders age 16 and older with underlying medical conditions that increase the risk for severe COVID-19 illness

WHEN: March 30

2C

WHO: Marylanders age 55 and older, as well as essential workers in critical industries

WHEN: April 13

3

WHO: All Marylanders age 16 and older

WHEN: April 27

Issued March 18, 2021. Timeline may accelerate depending upon vaccine supply.

Eligibility Maryland has launched a [pre-registration site](#) for its mass vaccination sites. Eligible Marylanders can also pre-register for appointments by calling the vaccination support center at 1-855-MD-GOVAX (1-855-634-6829). Appointments will not be scheduled on a first-come, first-serve basis, but they will be distributed equitably based on eligibility and supply. This move to

centralize distribution is a good start that the Senate Vaccine Oversight Group has advocated for over the past two months.

Opening Timeline:

- **Phase 2A:** Tuesday, March 23: Marylanders 60 and older
 - **Phase 2B:** Tuesday, March 30: Marylanders 16 and older with underlying medical conditions that increase the risk of severe COVID-19 illness
 - **Phase 2C:** Tuesday, April 13: Marylanders 55 and older, or who are essential workers in critical industries including construction, food services, utilities, transportation, financial services, and IT
 - **Phase 3:** Tuesday, April 27: All Marylanders 16 and older
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LET ME HEAR FROM YOU:

Thank you in advance for following our efforts this session and continuing to place your trust me in to serve the 12th Legislative District and the whole State of Maryland. My team is intensely focused on providing constituent support as we work through the COVID-19 emergency. If there is anything we can do to help - COVID related or otherwise - please do not hesitate to contact my office via email or phone. You will get a prompt response.

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COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS AND LEADERSHIP ROLES



- **Ways and Means**
- **Deputy Majority Whip**
- **Chair- Early Childhood Subcommittee- Ways and Means**
- **Education Subcommittee - Ways and Means**
- **Chair - Education Subcommittee – Balt. Co. Delegation**
- **Joint Committee on Children, Youth & Families**
- **House of Delegates Representative to Education Commission of the States, Professional Standards for Teacher Education Board, and State Interagency Coordinating Council**
- **Advisory Board - MD Center for School Safety**
- **Advisory Board Member - Visit Howard County**
- **Community Leadership Board - Catonsville Y**