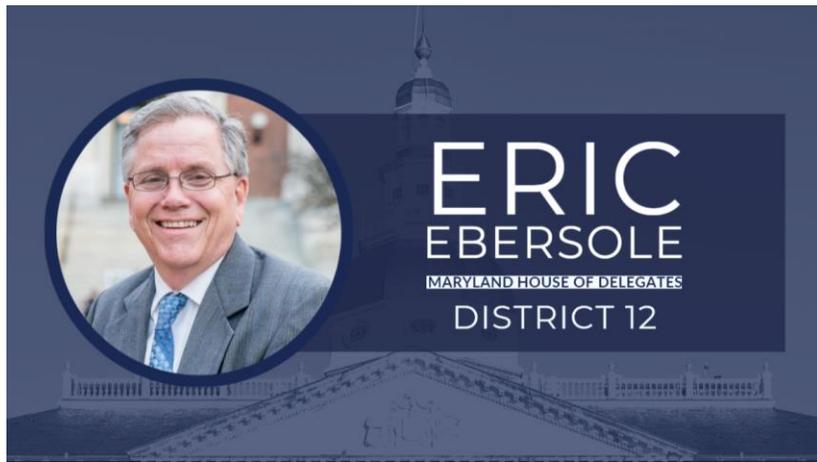




MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES



THE CONNECTION

Annapolis ↔ Howard and Baltimore Counties

**A PERIODIC NEWSLETTER
TO KEEP YOU UP TO DATE**

SESSION BEGINS 2021

**Session Begins
2021**

Overrides

What's Coming

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DELEGATE

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Out of an abundance of caution, we started session by working hard online in committee and getting bills ready for the floor. There were many good bills that were stalled in 2020 by our early departure due to the pandemic. We are getting many of these ready to return to their previous position in the process.

Now we have enough returning legislation, some good new bills, and some important veto overrides ready to justify coming back to the floor.

We will be in two locations simultaneously - quite a feat - so we can remain safely distant. And, of course, we will wear masks, wash our hands, be screened each day, and get tested regularly.



Our first task will be to address several vetoes by the Governor. He nullified quite a number of pieces of legislation that were carefully crafted and well considered. He used, as a blanket justification, the economics of the pandemic - based on economic forecasts last May.

The economic outlook has improved significantly and improvement should continue.

However, even with that in mind, I believe the Governor intended to veto these bills long before the shutdown last March - the shock of the pandemic was a red herring. We are moving to override a handful of them. I will support them with my vote and my voice. Here is a partial list:

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future -This is my highest priority. After 35 years teaching in the public schools, I know we did many things well, but I always knew we needed to change some things and improve. This legislation, based on the years of work by the Kirwan Commission, has so many good initiatives that I will only be able to highlight some of them here. It will

focus on improving programs for communities where there is a concentration of poverty, for special needs students, and for English language learners. It will expand 3 and 4 year old pre-k - which every study I have read says makes a significant difference both to the child personally



BLUEPRINT
for Maryland's
FUTURE

in life, but also to our community as they grow to be adults who better reach their potential to contribute positively. It will attract and keep educators, especially those from our minority communities, by offering them career and leadership paths that do not take them completely out of the classroom. It also creates a robust accountability program to watch that the programs are being effectively implemented.

Clearly it is comprehensive and well considered. The override will correct the error of the veto and will help Maryland to move, in the the next decade, to having a world class education system that will be the envy of the country and the world.

A consequence of the veto of the Blueprint is the cancelation of the **Built to Learn Act**. These two were linked as part of that comprehensive education improvement initiative. Many of our schools are aging out, especially in well established and low income communities. Built to Learn added the third leg of education improvement - good facilities. The Blueprint would have and now will take care of the first two - strong curricular programs and credible & caring staff to deliver them.



Apparently, the Governor felt this was too expensive and didn't think that school facility improvement was worth the investment. This very tangible investment will be able to commence as well with the override of the Blueprint veto.

Rifles and Shotguns – Transfers - We are slowly chipping away at loopholes that create barriers to our goal of safe gun ownership. This legislation would help stop possible sales without proper vetting of the new owner. It requires that both parties in a gun transfer engage a licensed firearms dealer to facilitate the sale, rental, or transfer. The dealer would have the expertise to (1) process the sale, rental, or transfer in the same manner as their own and therefore (2) conduct a background check. The override will create this safe pathway for gun transfers and ownership.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

Rather than override, Speaker Jones is planning to reintroduce a bill that would provide an additional \$58 million/year to Maryland's historically Black colleges and universities for 10 years to end the state's lengthy lawsuit over inequitable funding of the schools.

The Governor vetoed this bill - again citing the fiscal impacts of of the pandemic. The bill was contingent on the state reaching a final settlement to make our HBCUs whole by Dec. 1 or else the legislation would be deemed moot. Overriding the veto then this session did not make sense, just as the veto did not. So the bill will have to be reintroduced, but this is akin to an override.

Prescription Drug Affordability Board

We will join the Senate to override the veto of legislation that would establish a permanent funding source for the Prescription Drug Affordability Board - a very important board established to keep medical costs to Marylanders under control.

The veto, like most of the others, was misguidedly predicated on overly pessimistic fiscal concerns related to pandemic. The legislation unanimously passed the Senate and received overwhelming support in the House in 2020 and will receive similar support in the override vote.



We have a host of other initiatives that are building up steam. Among them are Law Enforcement Reform, Pandemic Job Relief for Individuals and Businesses, Unemployment Program Improvement, Rent and Mortgage Protection, Climate Change Mitigation, Student Mental Health, Child Care Support, and School Re-Opening. I will cover these large issues along with my own initiatives and legislation in my next newsletter - coming soon as things are moving fast now.

LET ME HEAR FROM YOU:

Thank you in advance for following our efforts in the coming Session and continuing to place your trust in me 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 this COVID-19 emergency. If there is anything we can do to help, please do not hesitate to contact my office via email or phone - where 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**
- **Advisory Board - MD Center for School Safety**
- **House of Delegates Representative to Education Commission of the States, Professional Standards for Education Board, and State Interagency Coordinating Council**