

# Legislative Newsletter



“Honesty is the first chapter in the book of wisdom.” --Thomas Jefferson

January 28, 2019

## Legislative Update



Throughout the legislative session I will be sending out periodic updates on what's happening in Annapolis.

Transparency is of the utmost importance, and I aim to do my best to keep you abreast on legislation that I am sponsoring and co-sponsoring, committee and county delegation meetings,

bond issues and more. In order to help with that, we will be releasing these newsletters in a variety of languages to represent the diverse nature of District 8 and keep all constituents informed.

*Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant.* ~ Robert Louis Stevenson



## Governor Hogan Releases Budget

With Governor Hogan's second term underway, he released a budget proposal for the 2020 fiscal year that begins July 1. As with any budget, there are both good and bad aspects to it. Let's start by looking at some of the good in the sprawling budget proposal. First and foremost, the Hogan administration is proposing tax relief for retirees, contributors to college savings plans, small business, companies located in distressed areas, and student loan debt. As college costs rise across the country, providing relief for those contributing to college savings plans and

helping with student debt relief is of paramount importance. Allowing 100 percent of interest paid on student loans to be tax deductible is a major step in the right direction. And of course, providing relief for retirees on fixed incomes and small business owners – of which there are many in District 8 – is a necessity as well. There is also an increase in education funding, but that increase was mandated by the legislature.

While there is plenty of good in the budget, there is also some bad news. The general fund spending increased 8.9 percent to \$19.5 billion, which isn't necessarily a bad thing, but it leaves a structural deficit of \$62 million, according to the Department of Legislative Services. Governor Hogan is also proposing more than tripling voucher funding to private and religious schools. Considering the Governor's very public spats with the late former Baltimore County Executive Kevin Kamenetz over funding for air conditioning in Baltimore County Public Schools – and Baltimore City officials concerning city schools – that money should be used towards capital improvements.

With that said, overall this is an agreeable budget. Governor Hogan delivered a very bipartisan address on inauguration day. He addressed the strained political climate in the state and country and called for reaching across the aisle. I agree 100 percent with that message and promise to work in a bipartisan manner to pass constructive legislation.

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*Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.* ~ Nelson Mandela

## Legislation

I am currently working on a few bills that will be beneficial to the community. Senator Kathy Klausmeier submitted SB0266 in the Senate, which authorizes the owner or operator of a parking lot used by a continuing care retirement community to limit the amount of time that a motor vehicle is authorized to be parked in any parking space designated for the use of individuals with disabilities, but it also prohibits limiting the amount of time that a vehicle may be parked in a parking space designated for the use of individuals with disabilities to less than one-half hour. I have cross-filed this bill in the House. Both Senator Klausmeier and I have heard from older constituents about this issue, and we hope this bill will help remedy a potentially dangerous problem. Retirees in need of handicap parking should not have to park far distances from the retirement community centers whose services they are trying to utilize.

I am also working on a two other pieces of legislation. One would create a task force to study the process of how state schools decide between in-state and out-of-state applicants. Out-of-state applicants should not take the place of an in-state applicant simply because the system brings more money in from the out-of-state applicant.

Another task force, I'm working on creating would study the Home and Hospital Teaching Program for Students. This task force would be comprised of legislators and professionals familiar with the program. The task force would assess whether students receiving instructional services through the program are provided with adequate support and instructional time to successfully transition back to a classroom setting, as well as analyze whether systems are sufficiently staffed and assess whether any transition plans should be reviewed or evaluated by a licensed medical professional before being implemented by local school systems.

I will also be co-sponsoring a few pieces of legislation right off the bat. HB0098 is a bipartisan bill that aims to fix the unfortunate issue that cropped up with State Retirees and their prescription drug plans. As a member of the Health and Government

Operations Committee, this is a huge priority for me. I will also be co-sponsoring HB0133, which will require schools to stock sanitary pads and tampons in bathrooms for students in grades 6 – 12, at no charge to the students. Access to these products can be a barrier to school attendance and performance for many people, and having easy access can greatly reduce the stigma surrounding menstruation. Pads and tampons are necessities that deserve to be treated like any other toiletry product we provide, like toilet paper and soap.

While not exactly legislation, I have already met with an MDOT representative regarding the Belair Road streetscaping project that was shelved about seven years ago. The Overlea corridor of Belair Road heading north to Perry Hall is in dire need of improvement. I fought for this as a community advocate and I'm raising the issue now. Hopefully we can get some movement and rejuvenate this project. MDOT's Office of Governmental Affairs is already looking into this, per my request, and I will provide updates as they come.



I want to close this update by saying that I am doing my best to work on your behalf, but I need your help! Please write in, let me know your priorities and your ideas about what our district and state need to better serve our community. You can reach my office by e-mail or phone.

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