

Legislative Newsletter



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

April 11, 2019

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

It has been a hectic final week and emotional Sine Die in the 2019 Maryland General Assembly, but before we get to legislation, I want to say a few words about the late Speaker of the House, Michael E. Busch (Jan 4, 1947-April 7, 2019). Mr. Busch served in the House for 32 years, 16 of which were spent as Speaker – the longest tenure in our state’s history. When you think about Maryland politics and government, you can’t help but think of Mr. Busch, who led the charge on issues like health care and education.



Whether or not you agreed with Mr. Busch’s positions or his style of governance, he spent the better part of his adult life working for a better Maryland. I am very thankful for these last few months, working alongside Mr. Busch. He has left an indelible mark on our state, and he deserves nothing but our gratitude and respect for his time serving the state.

KIRWAN FUNDING

Last week saw the passage of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future, which aims to transform Maryland’s education system via investment in full-day pre-kindergarten for

three- and four-year-olds, increased teacher salaries, developing a college and career readiness (CCR) standard, with extra resources for students with disabilities, English learners, and students in schools with high concentrations of poverty, and strengthening accountability. This is a massive investment in our children, and it is one that is long overdue. Over the last few years, Maryland’s education system has slipped in virtually every ranking, but this legislation should help remedy that.



In the fiscal year 2020, almost \$8.5 million will go towards special education and almost \$1 million is going to help schools with a high concentration of poverty. Over \$2.5 million is being provided for struggling learners, with almost \$10 million going toward teacher salaries and almost \$600,000 going toward pre-kindergarten. In total, Baltimore County will see over \$22 million in increased education spending for the fiscal year 2020. Across the state, the total investment in 2020 will be over \$255 million. This is a big win for education across the state, and it’s a big win for our youth.

“You can cut all the flowers, but you cannot keep Spring from coming.”
— Pablo Neruda

OYSTER SANCTUARY OVERRIDE

At the end of last week, Governor Hogan surprised the General Assembly by vetoing a piece of legislation aimed at permanently protecting oyster sanctuaries in five waterways targeted for restoration. Governor Hogan said he was vetoing the bill after hearing from watermen. Strangely, in a statement, Governor Hogan said this bill was bad for the Chesapeake Bay. That could not be further from the truth. Scientists and environmentalists came out opposed to the veto, citing the necessity of these sanctuaries to build up the population, which has essentially been halved since 1999. While deregulation might provide a short-term boost for watermen, it is shortsighted to think that deregulation here is what is best. We quickly moved to override the Governor's veto.



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SMOKING AGE RAISED

Last week the General Assembly also moved forward on a bill to increase the smoking age from 18 to 21. With the rise in use of e-cigarettes among teens, action needed to be taken to address this health issue. Washington D.C. and eight other states – including our neighbors to the south, Virginia – have already increased the minimum age from 18 to 21, and more states will likely be following. In 2011, only 1.5 percent of high school students used e-cigarettes. That number is now around 20 percent. About 90 percent of smokers had their first cigarette by the time they turned 18. This legislation will help keep tobacco and nicotine products out of the hands of our youth, and I was proud to support this bill.



Thank you for reading and I look forward to hearing from all of you.

Best,

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