



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

April 11, 2017

Dear Neighbor,

Thank you for the privilege and honor you have given me to represent you in Annapolis. I am proud of the work we have accomplished this past session. The Maryland General Assembly put forth a series of bills to protect Maryland from the numerous threats from Washington in regards to the Affordable Care Act, reproductive health care, funding for the Chesapeake Bay, and protecting immigrants and Muslim Marylanders from unconstitutional Executive Orders. We were also thrilled to be the lead sponsor of the Women's Rally on Annapolis, which brought over 450 Marylanders to Lawyers Mall to rally around what became the Women's Agenda of 2017. Please find below an overview of the 2017 legislative session:

The State Budget

The legislature gave approval to the \$43.5 billion fiscal year 2018 state budget closing a \$400 million revenue gap without raising taxes while also limiting tuition increases at public colleges and universities to 2 percent. This budget fully funds current education mandates with \$6.4 billion in aid dedicated to our public schools. Democrats in the General Assembly were able to include a 3.5 percent raise for workers who take care of developmentally disabled individuals and family members. This budget also protects Maryland's AAA bond rating by keeping \$860 million in the state's rainy day fund.

Education

I was a proud cosponsor of *The Less Testing, More Learning Act* (HB461), which caps the time allocated to standardized testing to two percent of the school year. High-stakes testing creates a narrowed curriculum and forces a teacher to "teach for the test" while passing over valuable learning experiences that will not appear as a multiple choice question. I was also proud to cosponsor the *Protect Our Schools Act* (HB978), which modernizes the way we measure school quality and student achievement. This bill seeks to change the "test-and-punish" culture that has failed to close the educational achievement gap in our schools. Giving up on failing schools by privatizing them is no longer an option under this bill.

Seniors

I was proud to be the lead sponsor of the *Medical Synchronization Bill* (HB1147), which allows pharmacists to provide partial refills in order to synchronize multiple medications, enabling patients to pick up all their medications in a single trip. This will make refilling prescriptions much more convenient by requiring less trips to the pharmacy, saving patients time and money. This also reduces healthcare costs stemming from unintended medical emergencies resulting from non-adherence to medication regimens.

The Health and Government Operations Committee worked tirelessly to allow Attorney General Brian Frosh to file suit against pharmaceuticals for price gouging. This bill comes in response to a sharp increase in prices for almost 300 drugs which have more than doubled since 2010. Two notable examples

are the EpiPen's price increase this past year from \$50 to \$600, and the 500 percent price rise of naloxone, which reverses heroin overdoses. With this legislation Maryland will be joining 19 other states currently in a lawsuit against six drug companies for artificially inflating prices.

The Environment

Maryland became the first state with gas reserves to ban fracking. I was incredibly proud to have made the trips to western Maryland with lead sponsor Del. Fraser-Hidalgo during my first year elected. It was incredibly satisfying to see three years' worth of work result in the best environmental policy of the decade. This ban will boost Maryland's renewable energy industry, reduce pollution, and combat climate change while creating jobs at a minimal cost to consumers. The legislature also successfully overrode Governor Hogan's veto of the *Clean Energy Jobs Act of 2016*. This will help Maryland decrease its dependency on fossil fuels while adding 5,000 jobs in the solar and wind energy sectors. Lastly, another environmental bill worth mentioning is the *Cownose Ray Fishery Management Plan and Moratorium on Contests* (HB211), prohibiting violent Cownose Ray fishing contests in state waters until July 2019.

Women's Legislative Agenda

Inspired by the Women's March on Washington, I organized the "Women's Rally on Annapolis" which attracted more than 450 Marylanders on a chilly Monday night to Lawyer's Mall in February. As a response to Washington's anti-women agenda, the rally highlighted state-level pro-women legislative initiatives. Speakers addressed bills regarding *Women's Economic Security, Healthy Families and Reproductive Justice*, and bills aimed at curtailing *Violence Against Women*. Speakers included Diana Philip, Executive Director of NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland and Karen Nelson, President and CEO of Planned Parenthood Maryland.

Maryland became the first state to secure state funding for family planning services in the event that we lose Title X funding due to a repeal of the ACA. We passed the *Health - Family Planning Services - Continuity of Care Act* (HB1083), which requires the governor to allocate \$2.7 million to compensate for any federal cuts to Planned Parenthood.

Another huge win for working families was the passing of paid sick leave for Maryland workers. *The Maryland Healthy Working Families Act* (HB1), will cover about 700,000 workers, requiring businesses with 15 or more employees to provide five days of paid sick leave. The legislation also ensures that small businesses are not irreversibly harmed while still keeping their commitment to protect the health of Maryland workers and their families. HB1 is necessary because approximately 75 percent of Marylanders live paycheck-to-paycheck, which leaves many people across the state going into work sick in order to provide for their families.

This year I was the proud sponsor of the *Discrimination in Employment- Conditions Related to Pregnancy or Childbirth* (HB214) bill. This bill would make clarifications to Maryland's existing law to ensure pregnant workers were not forced into taking leave-without-pay as an alternative to a "reasonable accommodation." The bill also allowed for accommodations to lactation-related needs. While the bill did not get out of committee, this is one of the issues I expect to see progress on during the next legislative session.

Veterans' Issues

Annually more than 100 Maryland veterans commit suicide. More must be done to prevent these incredibly tragic losses. *Veterans Affairs - Maryland Veterans Service Animal Program - Establishment* (SB441) establishes a unique service within the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs to pair veterans with therapy dog programs. It would also create a funding mechanism to raise private funds to support programs that help treat veterans with PTSD by training service dogs for returning wounded veterans. One of these nonprofits that will benefit from this bill is the Warrior Canine Connection in Montgomery County. The legislature also passed the *Hire Our Veterans Act of 2017* (HB349) which will allow for an income tax credit for small businesses who hire qualified veteran employees.

Mental Health & Opioid Epidemic

Over one in five male millennials have been prescribed ADHD medication at some point in their lives. In response, I sponsored and successfully passed *Public Health - Treatment of Attention - Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder - Identification and Posting Of Information* (HB184), which requires the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to set up an informational website for parents and students about the vast portfolio of behavioral and therapeutic treatments available. As a result, we are hoping that stimulant medication will no longer be parents' default plan after an ADHD diagnosis. Awareness of non-pharmacological alternatives will help erase some of big pharma's hold on the next generation. Additionally, the legislature passed a package of bills to address the opioid epidemic. Three bills aimed to secure funding for wraparound services and medication affordability were *Heroin and Opioid Prevention Effort (HOPE) and Treatment Act* (HB1329), *Heroin and Opioid Education and Community Act of 2017* (HB1082), and the *Recovery Residence Residential Rights Protection Act* (HB869). The *HOPE Act* would establish a 24/7 Health Crisis Hotline and a network of crisis treatment centers to provide 24/7 access for those experiencing mental health or substance use disorder crisis. HB1082 requires the State Board of Education to develop a program on addiction and prevention education in public schools. HB869 requires DHMH to compile a list of credentialed recovery residences in Maryland.

Protecting Our Children

Sexual assault in our schools has been at the forefront of national and local news recently. In Montgomery County, there were 287 rapes in FY 2016. Studies have shown that rapists tend to be repeat offenders. These troubling facts led me to fight strongly for *Montgomery County - Family Life and Human Sexuality Curriculum - Affirmative Consent MD 14-17* (HB365), which will teach affirmative consent in sexual education classes in Montgomery County High Schools. If we educate our youth on the importance of mutual respect and seeking consent before pursuing a sexual act, we can reduce the number of rapists in the future. Unfortunately, the Senate did not allow this bill to pass even after hours of debate and compromise within the committee.

I was also a proud cosponsor of *Public Schools - Suspensions and Expulsions* (HB425), which prohibits the use of school suspension to discipline students from pre-Kindergarten through second grade. Black and Latino students are suspended and expelled at a rate over three times greater than white students. If the problem of excessive suspensions continues, the pathway to a college education will become narrower for our children of color.

Protecting Diverse Communities

I was proud champion of the *Maryland Trust Act* (HB1362) this session. The bill does NOT make Maryland a so-called “sanctuary state.” The bill was worked on by a bipartisan workgroup in the House judiciary committee to prohibit the use of local resources to enforce federal immigration law. With provisions outlawing interrogations about someone’s nationality, immigration status, or religion, the bill aimed to protect Marylanders from racial profiling. The bill also prohibits the state from participating in or implementing any kind of religious-based registry. Third, the bill would have required a judicial warrant for prolonged detention - past what state law requires - in accordance with the Fourth Amendment in an effort to protect the constitutional rights of all Marylanders. The true intent of this bill is to foster community trust of local law enforcement, so that immigrants with or without status feel comfortable reporting crimes and assisting in investigations. A recent *Washington Post* poll found that almost 75 percent of Marylanders agree that immigration enforcement is the responsibility of the federal government, not our local police.

The *Maryland Trust Act* was unfortunately watered down in the Senate to the point that it did nothing further to protect immigrants, other than codify case law by the 4th Circuit in *Santos vs. Frederick Co. Board of Commissioners*, where the court found that undocumented immigrants are protected by the Fourth Amendment from unreasonable stops, for purposes of questioning immigration status.

It has been the greatest privilege and blessing to represent District 19 in Annapolis. Please share your ideas and concerns about our district and state by emailing me at marice.morales@house.state.md.us, or calling 301-858-3528. Best wishes for a beautiful spring and summer seasons!

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Maricé Morales". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Maricé Morales