



January 13, 2020

Welcome to my Legislative Session newsletter! Here's what happened during the first week of Maryland's 2020 Legislative Session, and a preview of what I'll be working on for you over the coming weeks until we adjourn on April 6th.

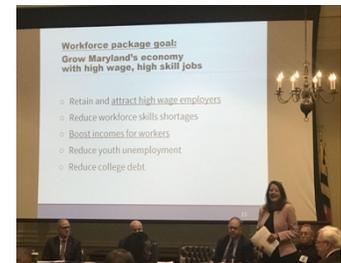
OPENING DAY OF SESSION

When the General Assembly convened on January 8th, I was thrilled to vote for Delegate Adrienne Jones as our Speaker. She made history by becoming the first woman *and* the first person of color to ever serve in this role. In her acceptance speech, she paid tribute to her predecessor and mentor, Speaker Mike Busch, and said the work we will do now, and into the future, will build on his legacy.



It was a thrill to celebrate with Senator Bill Ferguson shortly after he was sworn in as President of the Maryland Senate. I have known Senator Ferguson for years through his leadership on education policy. I can't wait to work with him and Speaker Jones on the *Blueprint for Maryland's Future*, which will build and elevate the teaching profession, provide more and better career and technical education opportunities for students planning to go directly into the workforce, improve accountability, and provide more resources for our most vulnerable students.

My first speech of the Session was to the Maryland Workforce Alliance, a coalition that promotes investment in training programs that help Marylanders acquire the skills necessary to obtain jobs in high-wage, high-growth occupations. Senator Jim Rosapepe and I provided a preview of what Maryland plans to do to help through the *Blueprint for Maryland's Future* and other legislation.



UPCOMING LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Ways and Means Committee. I am continuing to serve on the Ways and Means Committee and I am thrilled that I have again been assigned to the *Education Subcommittee* and the *Election Law Subcommittee*. Over the past nine months, I have been busy working on the following bills that will be considered by my subcommittees:



- **Supporting Fair Elections** - Bans the creation and use of Deepfakes within 90 days of an election, and establishes fines and/or jail time as punishment for offenders. Deepfake is a video and audio editing technique that intentionally misleads voters by manipulating words, faces and actions of individuals to make them appear to have done or said things they did not do or say.
- **Supporting Pregnant and Parenting Teens** - Improves support for pregnant and parenting students to stay in high school through graduation. As a former GED teacher who taught many students after they had dropped out of high school and were struggling, I know what a tremendous difference this will make for these students and their young families.
- **Expanding Use of Restorative Practices in Schools** - Provides funding for school districts to break the school-to-prison pipeline by providing training for teachers and school administrators in restorative justice practices. It passed the House last year but, unfortunately, died in the Senate.
- **Expanding Mental Health Supports for Students** - Requires school districts to collect and report data on the ratio of key staff to students as a first step in addressing acute shortages of school counselors, psychologists, social workers and other key roles, at the suggestion of my Educators' Cabinet, a group of teachers and school counselors who I meet with regularly.
- **Expanding Bilingual Pre-K Opportunities for Students** - Expands bilingual pre-K programs for three- and four-year olds as part of the *Blueprint for Maryland's Future*. Research shows that bilingual pre-K programs tremendously benefit children for the rest of their lives, both in terms of their language skills and their brain development. Five states have policies in place for strong, bilingual public pre-K programs; Maryland is not one of them. I am working to change that.
- **Expanding Early College High School Programs** - Ensures that the state will collect needed data on student participation in dual enrollment programs, and other key college and career readiness measures. This is the next step in ensuring that more high school students have access to this opportunity to graduate from high school with an Associate's degree at no cost to themselves or their families. This bill builds on my 2019 amendment to the *Blueprint* that passed last year and expanded eligibility for dual enrollment programs.
- **Providing Safe School Transportation for Students** – Amends current law so that the number of students on a bus cannot exceed the number of seats on the bus. This is necessary because some Maryland students ride overcrowded buses with more students than seats, an unacceptable safety hazard.
- **Supporting Students with Disabilities for Success at Community Colleges** - Creates a grant program for community colleges to cover the cost of supplemental services, supports, and accommodations for students with disabilities. All students should have an equal chance at success!

PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

It was great to meet with high school student activists who said they will be following the call from Greta Thunberg and returning to the Statehouse every Friday through #FridaysForFuture to remind legislators of the extreme importance of championing the environment. These climate activists have put together an excellent legislative agenda. I spoke to them about two bills I will introduce, the first of which was suggested by South River High School students!



- **Ensuring Clean, Safe Drinking Water in All MD Schools!** – Requires school districts to annually certify that drinking water is clean and safe. Water that is unsafe due to lead is a problem in Anne Arundel County and other parts of our state. The temporary solution has been for students to buy much more bottled water in schools, which they don't want to do because it contributes to pollution.
- **Composting and waste reduction** – Provide funding for school districts to divert edible food back into the community to food banks and to divert compostable food waste into composting programs, and is based on similar law that have recently passed in three other states that are leaders in advancing environmentally sound practices and fighting climate change.



Entering the Statehouse, I get chills every time I remember the historic event that occurred on December 23, 1783, just steps away from our House Chamber when General George Washington resigned his commission as commander-in-chief of the Continental Army. He performed perhaps the world's greatest act of statesmanship when he resigned as commander-in-chief, thereby ending monarchical rule and ushering in the era of American democracy that continues 237 years later. My Commemorative bill will recognize December

23 as Democracy Day in Maryland every year to remember and honor this great day in our nation's history.

HOUSE OF DELEGATES PRIORITIES

Key bills that the House intends to pass and that I intend to cosponsor include:

- **Blueprint for Maryland's Future** - Creates a new, better, fairer state funding formula for our schools that is aligned with the *Blueprint for Maryland's Future* is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve our schools and will lay a strong foundation for our state economy. Introduced by Speaker Jones.
- **Improving School Facilities** - Fully funds acquisition, design, construction, improvement, renovation, expansion, equipping, or financing of public schools. Anne Arundel County will receive 12.5% of the funds. The bill also addresses other needs such as supporting mold and lead pipe remediation and funding high quality early education programs. Introduced by Speaker Jones.
- **Anti-Hate Crimes** – Bans the use of any item or symbol, including nooses or swastikas to threaten and intimidate people. The bill includes punishments of up to three years in jail or a \$5,000 fine. There is no place in our society for use of symbols that promote hate. Introduced by Delegate Chang.
- **Anti-Vaping** – Bans flavored e-cigarette and tobacco cigarette products that are favored like fruit, candy and other non-tobacco, given the growing evidence showing that vaping products are harmful, particularly to our youth. Introduced by Delegate Davis.
- **Closing Loophole for Long Gun Registrations** – Closes a loophole that exempts long guns sold through private transactions from the same background checks that are required for long guns sold by licensed dealers. Introduced by Delegate Atterbeary.

TRIBUTE TO COMMUNITY LEADER KAREN FELDMAN

It is with a heavy heart that I write to you about the passing of Karen Feldman. I extend my deepest condolences to her husband Babe, and the entire Feldman and Seeds 4 Success family. Karen transformed her teaching experience into unparalleled community service by working with the Eastport Girls Club and then co-founding Seeds 4 Success where she helped countless youth reach their potential. My top scholarship recipient in 2019 was mentored in the Seeds program. Thank you Karen for being an inspiration.



CONTACT ME!

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