

The Maryland General Assembly adjourned the 2022 Legislative Session on April 11, 2022. This was once again a productive session for District 29, as I was able to secure State funding for many important local projects.

The Capital Budget included funding for several projects across District 29, including accessibility improvements at St. Clement's Island and the construction of the Maryland Heritage Interpretative Center. It also included funds for improvements and renovations at the Leonard Calvert House at Historic St. Mary's City, St. Mary's College of Maryland, and MedStar St. Mary's Hospital.

I was successful in securing additional funding for a number of important local projects through the Legislative Bond Initiative process, including the replacement of the Trent Hall Creek pier in Golden Beach, accessibility upgrades for Annmarie Gardens, restoration of the Newtowne Manor House, critical dam repairs for Breton Bay, and updates for the Patuxent River Naval Air Museum. Bond initiatives were also included in the budget for the Lexington Park Health Department Hub, Farming 4 Hunger St. Mary's County, St. James Public Comfort Station, St. Mary's Caring Soup Kitchen, and St. Mary's County Mobile Library.

The budget also includes funds to establish a Kennedy Krieger Institute school to serve Southern Maryland students with special needs. This campus will provide needed services to our special needs students in Calvert, Charles, Prince George's and St. Mary's Counties rather than traveling long distances to attend programs in other parts of the State or entirely opting out of appropriate placements due to the distant location. I worked with the Southern Maryland Delegation to advance this important project and am incredibly proud to have these funds allocated to this project.

In addition to projects funded for this year, the Capital Budget also includes authorizations to spend money on projects in future years. This year, the budget includes a \$10 million allocation of funding that the State plans to spend next year to widen Point Lookout Road (MD 5) from Indian Bridge Road (MD 471) to Great Mills Road (MD 246). I was proud to vote to advance this important, long-awaited project for St. Mary's County commuters.

Sponsored Legislation – I was proud to sponsor the below bills during this legislative session which will be presented to the Governor for his signature:

Senate Bill 79 – Higher Education – Senatorial and Delegate Scholarships – Program Accreditation requires an in-state academic program to be accredited before it can be considered comparable when awarding Senatorial and Delegate Scholarships. Under current law, a legislator can allow a student to use a Senatorial or Delegate Scholarship at an out-of-state school only if the academic program the student is pursuing is not available at an in-state college or university, regardless of whether that in-state program is accredited.

Senate Bill 454 – Marine Contractor License – Authorization, Requirements, and Fees was requested by the Calvert County Commissioners and permits county and municipal employees to perform minor repairs and maintenance to public access facilities on or over public waterways that currently require these jurisdictions to hire a licensed marine contractor.

Senate Bill 455 – Chesapeake Bay and Coastal Sport Fishing License and Recreational Fishing – Pilot Program and Task Force establishes a pilot program and a task force to work towards obtaining more accurate data to estimate the number of fish caught in Maryland’s waterways by recreational anglers. This more accurate data will assist the Department of Natural Resources when setting policies to maintain a stable fishery in our State.

Senate Bill 579 – Vehicle Equipment – Highway Maintenance and Service – Green Flashing Lights authorizes highway maintenance and service equipment and vehicles owned by the State or local governments to use green flashing lights simultaneously with yellow or amber flashing lights while in use. This bill was requested by the State Highway Administration to give our State and local governments more options as they work to best protect Maryland’s highway maintenance workers.

Senate Bill 582 – Natural Resources – Recreation on Private Land – Hunting protects landowners from liability if they allow individuals to hunt on their property and provides that the hunter assumes the responsibility and liability for their safety and actions.

Senate Bill 673 – Natural Resources Police Force – Employees – Authority of Secretary allows the Natural Resources Police (NRP) force to be governed and managed similarly to how all other statewide police forces operate in Maryland. The bill was amended in the Senate to also require the NRP to establish a study group that will propose actions to be taken to pursue diversity within its sworn and civilian ranks.

Senate Bill 876 – Water Pollution – Oyster Repletion Supplemental Environmental Projects requires the Maryland Department of the Environment to prioritize supplemental environmental projects involving oyster repletion for water pollution violations that occur in the proximity of an oyster population.

Cross-filed Legislation – I also sponsored the following bills which passed this session in an identical form to Senate bills that I introduced:

House Bill 170 – Calvert County – Sunday Hunting permits hunting on each Sunday of the game bird and game mammal seasons in Calvert County. Under the bill as amended by the Senate, hunting will only be permitted on the additional Sundays from 30 minutes before sunrise to 10:30 a.m. Sundays that are currently open to hunting in Calvert County will not be affected by this bill. House Bill 170 is identical to Senate Bill 220, which I introduced on behalf of the Calvert County Senators.

House Bill 602 – Board of Public Works – Historic Sotterley – Operating Grant provides needed operating funds to Historic Sotterley in St. Mary’s County for each of the next three years. This bill is identical to Senate Bill 913, which I sponsored.

Co-Sponsored Legislation – In addition to these bills, I was proud to co-sponsor and work on a number of other important legislation sponsored by other Senators that passed this session:

Senate Bill 273 – Environment – PFAS Chemicals – Prohibitions and Requirements (George “Walter” Taylor Act) limits the use of PFAS, a chemical known to be responsible for causing cancer, in Maryland. This bill is a priority for Maryland’s firefighters who encounter PFAS in numerous ways, including in

firefighting foam as well as in their gear. The legislation was named after George “Walter” Taylor, a firefighter from District 29 who passed away from a form of cancer that has been linked to PFAS.

Senate Bill 378 – Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland – Funding for Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission would ensure funding for the operations of the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC) for at least the next three years. This legislation will give SMADC and our agricultural community certainty and predictability going forward as they advance significant projects for Southern Maryland, such as the Regional Agricultural Center that will be located in Charlotte Hall.

Senate Bill 381 – Natural Resources – Wildlife Trafficking Prevention prohibits a person from purchasing, selling, offering for sale, or possessing with the intent to sell, any item that the person knows, or should know, is a part or product that comes from an endangered species, such as ivory. The bill has exceptions for musical instruments, knives, and firearms for which the part or product is integral to the item and is less than 20% of the total weight of the item. I was proud to bring my experience combatting wildlife trafficking to help in ensuring this bill’s passage.

Senate Bill 405 – Income Tax – Retirement Income Subtraction Modifications and Senior Credit (Retirement Tax Elimination Act of 2022) creates a tax credit for Marylanders 65 or over who make less than \$100,000 per year individually or less than \$150,000 jointly. The tax credit is \$1,000 individually or if only one of the individuals filing a joint return is eligible for the credit, and \$1,750 for joint filings. The bill also expands the State income tax deduction for retired public safety officers as well as fire, rescue, and emergency services personnel.

Senate Bill 507 – Procurement – Construction Contracts – Contract Modification – Report requires the Secretary of Transportation and the Secretary of General Services to report to the General Assembly the number and percentage of State construction procurements using a fixed-price contract with price adjustment and for price adjustments executed under those contracts, the material types affected and the average price adjustment for each material type. This study was passed based on a bill that I co-sponsored which was introduced after hearing concerns from Maryland businesses who have State contracts regarding the impact that rising prices of materials has had on ability to do business with the State.

Senate Bill 709 – Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury Alternative Therapies Fund – Establishment (David Perez Military Heroes Act (End 22 a Day)) establishes the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury Alternative Therapies Fund to study alternative therapies for post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injuries in veterans.

Senate Bill 826 – Economic Development – Maryland Watermen’s Microloan Program – Establishment establishes the Maryland Watermen’s Microloan Program to provide loans to qualified commercial fishermen to continue commercial operations in the State. The Governor included funding in a supplemental budget for this program to be established this year.

Senate Bill 830 – Natural Resources – Oysters – Spat, Shells, and Substrate makes numerous changes to Maryland law to help promote oyster production in the State and represents a significant investment into restoring and replenishing oysters in our State’s waterways, including through loans for seafood

processing projects, grants for oyster shell recycling, and funding for a survey of existing and potential oyster habitats.

Senate Bill 1005 – State Retirement and Pension System – Divestment From Russia was introduced and passed in response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and requires the State Retirement and Pension System to divest any investments they have in Russian companies.

Senate Bill 1010 – Motor Fuel Taxes – Tax-Free Period provided a 30–day gas tax holiday in Maryland. While I was pleased to vote for this bill, I believe we should have done more to provide gas tax relief to Marylanders. I supported an amendment to this bill which would have eliminated the annual automatic increase in the gas tax that is tied to inflation; however, this amendment failed.

Other Legislation – I was proud to work with my colleagues in the General Assembly on other important legislation that passed this year, including:

Senate Bill 269 – Open Meetings Act – Application and Enhanced Requirements (Maryland State Agency Transparency Act of 2022) applies an enhanced version of Maryland’s Open Meetings Act to a number of State agencies. I added an amendment to this bill adding the Historic St. Mary’s City Commission to the list of agencies included in this bill to ensure that our residents and all Marylanders can have more insight into the important work of the Commission.

House Bill 146 – Education – Reportable Offenses, Student Discipline, and School Disruptions – Presence of an Attorney and Reporting includes provisions requiring local school systems to report annually on the number of disruptions that occur in their schools. These provisions are similar to and work to accomplish the same objective as Senate Bill 583, which I introduced this session.

Local Legislation – In addition to these bills, I also worked to secure passage of seven bills that are specific to St. Mary’s or Calvert Counties that were requested by our local governments:

St. Mary’s County

House Bill 474 – Leonardtown – Alcoholic Beverages Licenses – Place of Worship Distance Restriction

House Bill 522 – St. Mary’s County – Tax Sales – Auctioneer Expenses

House Bill 527 – St. Mary’s County – Emergency Services Applicants – Polygraph Examinations

Calvert County

Senate Bill 442 – Calvert County – Public Facilities Bonds

House Bill 842 – Calvert County – Hotel Rental Tax – Distribution of Revenue

House Bill 886 – Calvert County – Board of License Commissioners – Compensation

House Bill 893 – Calvert County – Procurement – Award of Multiyear Contracts